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DEMON POSSESSION IN THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS

A Thesis

Presented to
the Faculty of
Asbury Theological Seminary

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Theology

Approved:

Advisor

Joseph S. May Jr.

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by

William Norman Duncan

July 1971

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ABBREVIATIONS

The following abbreviations have been used in the text of this thesis:

VERSIONS OF THE BIBLE

AV	The Holy Bible: Authorized Version.
Berkeley	Berkeley Version of the Holy Bible.
Goodspeed	The Bible: An American Translation.
Noffatt	The Bible: A New Translation.
NASB	New American Standard Bible: New Testament.
NEB	The New English Bible: New Testament.
RSV	The Holy Bible: Revised Standard Version.
RV	The Holy Bible: Revised Version.
Weymouth	The Modern Speech New Testament.

GENERAL WORKS

ERE	Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics.
NBD	The New Bible Dictionary.
TDNT	Theological Dictionary of the New Testament.

THE BABYLONIAN TALMUD

'A. Z.	'Abodah Zarah	Nid.	Niddah.
Bek.	Bekoroth.	Pes.	Pesaḥim.
Ber.	Berakoth.	R. H.	Rosh Hashanah.
B.Ḳ.	Baba Ḳamma.	Sanh.	Sanhedrin.
'Erub.	'Erubin.	Shab.	Shabbath.
Giṭ.	Giṭṭin.	Sheb.	Shebi'ith.
Ḥag.	Ḥagigah.	Soṭ.	Soṭah.
Hor.	Horayoth.	Ta'an.	Ta'anith.
Kid.	Kiddushin.	Yeb.	Yebamoth.
Me'il.	Me'ilah.	Yom.	Yoma.

MIDRASH RABBAH

Ber. R.	Bereshith Rabbah.
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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

THE PRESENT SITUATION AND TRENDS

The rejection of supernaturalism in the latter half of the nineteenth century, coupled with what Conybeare called "free inquiry, a scientific attitude, modern science and modern scepticism,"¹ resulted in the decline and decay of belief in demons. Also contributing to this decline has been the rise of psychology which seemed to offer an alternative explanation to the phenomena previously attributed to demon possession. But even in the nineteenth century there were dissident voices against the prevailing trends discountenancing belief in demonic activity. For example, Maurice, writing of the belief in evil spirits from which modern man has delivered us, has this to say,

Are we sure that the deliverance has been effected? Are we sure that fears of an invisible world . . . about us, are extinct? . . . Are we sure that all our discoveries, or supposed discoveries respecting the spiritual world within us, may not be equally appealed to in confirmation of a new demoniac system? Are we sure that the very enlightenment, which says it has ascertained Christian stories to be legends, will not be enlisted on the same side, because if we only believe these facts, it will be so easy to show how those falsities may have originated? . . . You may talk against devilry as you like; you will not get rid of it unless you can tell human beings whence comes that sense of a tyranny over their own very selves. . . .

.
. . . the assertion stands broad and patent in the four

¹F.C. Conybeare, "Christian Demonology," The Jewish Quarterly Review, IX (1897), 600-601.

Gospels . . . the acknowledgment of an Evil Spirit is characteristic of Christianity.²

Bishop Robert Caldwell, observing the situation in South India in 1876, raised the question, "Does devil-possession in the sense in which it is referred to in the New Testament, exist at this present time among the least civilized of the nations of the globe?"³ In the same article, he later said,

I contend that it appears that certain demonolaters of the present day, as far as the outward evidence of their affliction goes, display as plain signs of demoniacal possession as ever were displayed eighteen hundred years ago.⁴

Those who have advocated belief in demonic activity have been labelled abnormal, fanatical, and disillusioned. However, there has been a renewed interest in demonology more recently. Merrill F. Unger declares, "In an age of spiritual anarchy, shocking immorality, and general world unrest, scientific advance and intellectual sophistication cannot gloss over the evil supernaturalism at work in our country."⁵ While some modern theologians refer to demonic forces which control

²Frederick Denison Maurice, Theological Essays (London: James Clarke and Co., 1957, first published 1853), pp. 44-46. Italics his.

³Robert C. Caldwell [Caldwell], "Demonolatry, Devil Dancing, and Demon Possession," Contemporary Review, February, 1876, cited by John L. Nevius, Demon Possession (8th ed.; Grand Rapids, Michigan: Kregel Publications, 1968), p. 96.

⁴Ibid., p. 97.

⁵Merrill F. Unger in his Preface to John L. Nevius, Demon Possession (8th ed.; Grand Rapids, Michigan: Kregel Publications, 1968), p. vi.

history, they tend to use the term "demonic" in an impersonal sense. Eduard Heimann writes of Paul Tillich's concept of the demonic as "the doctrine of the creative impulse in life."⁶ Oscar Cullmann declares that the duty of the Church is to stand against the ἄρχοντες "in view of the fact that it knows that their power is only apparent and that in reality Christ has already conquered all demons."⁷ But for Bultmann this is not necessary, as "it is impossible to use electric light and the wireless and to avail ourselves of modern medical and surgical discoveries, and at the same time to believe in the New Testament world of daemons and spirits."⁸ Nevertheless, James S. Stewart, speaking of theological systems, accuses them of having "failed to take seriously the New Testament's concentration upon the demonic nature of the evil from which the world has to be redeemed."⁹ Concluding his pungent article, he throws out a challenge, that

. . . in a day when spirit forces of passionate evil have been unleashed upon the earth and when fierce emotions are tearing the world apart, it is no use having a milk-and-water

⁶Eduard Heimann, The Theology of Paul Tillich, ed. Charles W. Kegley and Robert W. Bretall (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1952), p. 314.

⁷Oscar Cullmann, Christ and Time: The Primitive Christian Conception of Time and History, trans. Floyd V. Filson (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1950), p. 198.

⁸Rudolph Bultmann, "New Testament and Mythology," Kerygma and Myth: A Theological Debate, ed. Hans Werner Bartsch, trans. Reginald H. Fuller (London: S.P.C.K., 1953), p. 5.

⁹James S. Stewart, "On a Neglected Emphasis in New Testament Theology," Scottish Journal of Theology, IV (September, 1951), 294.

passionless theology: no good setting a tepid Christianity against a scorching paganism. The thrust of the demonic has to be met with the fire of the divine.¹⁰

It is possible to fall into two equal and opposite errors. On the one hand, to refuse to believe in the existence of demons; on the other, to show an unhealthy interest in them.¹¹ It seems significant that an essay appearing in Time magazine some months ago, addressing the American scene, commented, "The country that began with theocracy could end with demonology."¹² One is encouraged to know that some scholars are making a fresh appraisal of the New Testament documents in the light of demonology. Within the last twenty years several significant monographs have come forth dealing with New Testament demonology. Caird has presented a study of Pauline theology;¹³ James M. Robinson has a suggestive study of the Gospel according to St. Mark in which the inauguration of the eschatological kingdom of God is set over against the exorcism narratives.¹⁴ Trevor Ling¹⁵ has produced a small

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 301

¹¹ C.S. Lewis, The Screwtape Letters (Glasgow: William Collins Sons, Fontana Books, 1956), p. 9.

¹² Melvin Maddocks, "Rituals--The Revolt Against the Fixed Smile," Time, October 12, 1970, p. 43.

¹³ G.B. Caird, Principalities and Powers: A Study in Pauline Theology (London: Oxford University Press, 1956).

¹⁴ James M. Robinson, The Problem of History in Mark, Studies in Biblical Theology No. 21 (Naperville, Illinois: Alec R. Allenson, Inc., 1957).

¹⁵ Trevor Ling, The Significance of Satan: New Testament Demonology and its contemporary relevance (London: S.P.C.K., 1961).

monograph on the contemporary relevance of New Testament demonology, and James Kallas¹⁶ has done great service in a helpful trilogy on New Testament demonology in which he declares that the central teaching of the New Testament is that Christ came into the world to defeat Satan and all his works. Robert A. Traina in his lectures on the Gospel according to St. Mark views man as under the control of the demonic and not rightly related to the Divine. For him, the Divine Rule, which seeks to bring wholeness to man, is inaugurated to encounter the manifestation of the demonic.¹⁷

Frequently articles appear in the national magazines featuring the occult, which is, in the present writer's opinion, closely associated with the demonic. It is exceptional for a newspaper not to have a horoscope column. T.V. and radio occasionally produce programs geared to heighten the occult. Even in toy shops, occult games such as Ouiji boards, "Voodoo," and "Clairvoyant" are available for the children.

PURPOSE, METHOD, AND SCOPE OF THIS STUDY

This thesis is an attempt to re-examine the teaching on demon

¹⁶James Kallas, The Significance of the Synoptic Miracles (Greenwich, Connecticut: The Seabury Press, 1961); The Satanward View: A Study in Pauline Theology (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1966); and Jesus and the Power of Satan (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1968).

¹⁷Robert A. Traina, Lectures on the Gospel according to St. Mark, given in Asbury Theological Seminary, Fall Semester, 1970.

possession in the Synoptic Gospels. This work attempts to demonstrate the possibility and validity of demon possession. In the present writer's opinion this subject is very relevant to the situation confronting us on every side in the world around us.

At first the ethnic and Jewish views on demon possession in the Old Testament period will be surveyed, and then the literature of the Inter-testamental period will be considered. In this way the development of the phenomena up to the New Testament period will be traced. Then the teaching of the Synoptic Gospels, that is, case studies of demon possession and the verbal teaching of Jesus, will be investigated, and the material will be evaluated. Next, an examination of the various important theories of demon possession in the light of the Synoptic teachings will be undertaken, in an attempt to show that demon possession is a valid and genuine phenomenon today.

In view of the wide field that demonology encompasses, the thesis has, of necessity, been limited to a treatment of the teaching on demon possession in the Synoptic Gospels. It is felt that the Synoptics highlight the emphasis upon the demonic in the New Testament, and, with a few exceptions, contain the main core of the teaching on the subject. Further, it has not been possible to deal with the whole field of demonology, but emphasis has been placed upon the activity of demon possession. In the present writer's opinion, occult activities come under demonology, but, due to the limitation of space, have not been included in the thesis. Also, the investigator has confined his research to those materials available in the English language. "This

subject needs study, research and experiment by Christian ministers, as well as secular medical experts."¹⁸

In this study the New Testament is treated as trustworthy. The Synoptic Gospels are reliable records of the genuinely real acts of a historical Person, Jesus Christ. The historicity of the events in the Synoptics has been under constant fire for over one hundred years. Yet in the judgment of the present writer, the reliability of the writings as records of fact has been attested.

MEANING AND BACKGROUND OF TERMS

Demonology

Demonology, according to Webster, is

- 1: a branch of learning that deals with demons or with popular beliefs in or superstitions about demons or evil spirits; also: a treatise on demons or on beliefs in demons.
- 2: belief in demons; specif.: a systematized religious doctrine of evil spirits.¹⁹

The term is sometimes used in a broader sense that includes such related areas as the occult, but for the purpose of this study the meaning is confined to the treatment of demons.

Demon (δαίμων , δαίμονιον)

The word δαίμων may be derived from:

¹⁸ Demon Experiences in Many Lands (Chicago: Moody Press, 1960), p. 7 (Preface).

¹⁹ Webster's Third New International Dictionary, 1967, p. 60.

(1) δαῶ which means "learn" and also "know." The term δαίμων then signifies the knowing, the perceiving.²⁰ Trench comments, "to know is the special prerogative of spiritual beings."²¹

(2) δαίω which can mean "divide" in the sense of distribute. Thus δαίμων would be distributor. Liddell and Scott think that the root of δαίμων is more probably δαίω in the sense "to distribute destinies,"²² thus δαίμων would be a distributor of destinies. Referring to this derivation, Trench speaks of the δαίμονες as "the dividers and allotters of good and evil to men."²³

In Homer δαίμων (demon) and θεός (god) are virtually interchangeable.²⁴ Later in Hesiod (about 800 B.C.) the demons are thought of as intermediate beings between the gods and men. Popular opinion had laid hold of δαίμων and formulated a doctrine of demons who were portrayed as controlling and disposing forces. In the development of the idea of intermediate beings, the demons are closely

²⁰ H.G. Liddell and R. Scott, A Greek-English Lexicon, rev. ed., I (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1925-40), 365-66, 371. Also, E.C.E. Owen, "Δαίμων and Cognate Words," Journal of Theological Studies, XXXII (1931), 133ff.

²¹ Richard C. Trench, Notes on the Miracles of Our Lord (2nd American ed.; New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1856), p. 129.

²² Liddell and Scott, loc. cit.

²³ Trench, loc. cit.

²⁴ Ebrard, "Demon, Demoniacs," Religious Encyclopaedia, ed. Philip Schaff, I (3rd ed.; New York: Funk and Wagnalls Company, 1891), 624. T.H. Gaster, "Demon, Demonology," The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, I (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962), 817.

associated with magic and incantations in the cultus and religion, and are even depicted as forces seeking to divert men from true worship. The idea of demons as rulers of human destiny resulted in their being connected with distress and misfortune. There followed a further development in which the philosophical systems absorbed the concept of demons possessing men.²⁵ Conybeare showed that in the fourth century B.C. Xenocrates, Empedocles and others spoke of belief in evil demons as well as in good demons. As among men, so also among demons there were "distinctions of virtue and vice."²⁶ It appears also that these demons were thought to be the departed spirits of wicked men. Popular Greek belief thought of δαίμων as a being equipped with supernatural powers, having a terrifying affect on human life and nature, but being able to be "placated, controlled, or at least held off by magical means."²⁷

In the Septuagint the word δαίμωνιον is always used in a bad sense. δαίμωνιον translates טְרֵפֹת in Deuteronomy 32:17 and Psalm 106:37 (LXX 105:37); דִּימֹן in Psalm 91:6 (LXX 90:6); דִּימֹן in Psalm 96:5 (LXX 95:5); דִּימֹן in Isaiah 13:21; דִּימֹן in Isaiah 34:14

²⁵Werner Foerster, "δαίμων, δαίμωνιον," Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, ed. G. Kittel, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, II (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1964), 3-5.

²⁶F.C. Conybeare, "Christian Demonology," The Jewish Quarterly Review, IX (1897), 88ff.

²⁷Foerster, op. cit., p. 8.

and דַּיָּמוֹן in Isaiah 65:11.²⁸

It is thus seen that the word δαίμων originally was equivalent to the gods of the Greeks; from this there developed the concept of an intermediate realm of deities. The distinction of good and bad demons followed. Finally the term came to have an almost exclusively evil connotation. In the New Testament the final stage has been reached in which δαίμων always means an evil spirit or a spirit that works evil.²⁹ Hence, demon means a deity, divinity, in the sense of being a distributor of destiny; also, demons, being intelligent are credited with superhuman knowledge, with the "power to afflict man with physical hurt, and moral and spiritual contamination."³⁰

Demoniac

The term may be used to suggest the characteristics of a demon, or of belonging to a demon. The Century Dictionary and Cyclopedia defines demoniac thus:

One who is supposed to be possessed by a demon; one whose volition and other mental faculties seem to be overpowered,

²⁸ Edwin Hatch and Henry A. Redpath, A Concordance to the Septuagint, I (Graz-Austria: Akademische Druck-U. Verlagsanstalt, 1954), 283. For an explanation of the usage of these words, see Merrill F. Unger, Biblical Demonology: A Study of the Spiritual Forces behind the Present World Unrest (7th ed.; Wheaton, Illinois: Scripture Press, 1967), pp. 59-61.

²⁹ Edward Langton, Essentials of Demonology: A Study of Jewish and Christian Doctrine, Its Origin and Development (London: Epworth Press, 1949), p. 127.

³⁰ Unger, op. cit., p. 61.

restrained, or disturbed in their regular operation by an evil spirit; specifically, a lunatic.³¹

The present writer will employ the term to describe a person who is supposedly possessed, or regarded as possessed by an evil spirit.

Possession

A general definition given by Webster states "possession" as "the condition of being dominated by something (as an extraneous personality, demon, passion, idea, or purpose)."³² More specifically, Fallaize in introducing the subject of possession, says,

Abnormal physical and psychical manifestations are regarded as evidence of the presence of a deity or spirit, good or evil, and every word and action of the subject are held to be outside his or her control and to proceed solely from the indwelling power.³³

John Massie suggests that germinal ideas of possession can be traced in Homer (Odyssey, V, 396, where a Σαίμων στουρπός causes a wasting sickness).³⁴

Demon Possession

The expression "demon possession" does not occur in the New

³¹The Century Dictionary and Cyclopedia, II (New York: The Century Co., 1903), 1528.

³²Webster's Dictionary, p. 1770.

³³E.N. Fallaize, "Possession (Introductory and Primitive)," Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, ed. James Hastings, X (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1919), 122.

³⁴J[ohn] M[assie], "Demons (Possession)," Encyclopaedia Biblica, eds. T.K. Cheyne and J.S. Black, I (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1899), 1071.

Testament. Edersheim states that Josephus used the term and from him on it has become common,³⁵ but Arndt and Gingrich point out that the word was known since Sophocles, though only "found in this sense in the comic writings."³⁶ δαίμονίζομαι means "be possessed by a demon (δαίμόνιον or δαίμων)" and literally means "be demonized." The participle ὁ δαίμονιζόμενος is most frequently employed in the New Testament referring to people who are possessed by a demon (Matthew 4:24; 8:16,28,33; 9:32; 12:22; Mark 1:32; 5:15,16). In classical Greek the word usually found is δαίμονίζω, meaning "to be violently possessed by, or to be in the power of, a demon."³⁷ While δαίμονίζομαι is the only word used in the New Testament referring to being possessed with a demon, the Fathers used either the classical δαίμονίζω, or the late and rare δαίμονιάω.³⁸ Interestingly, in modern Greek the active δαίμονίζω appears with the meaning "drive mad."³⁹

³⁵ Alfred Edersheim, The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, I (8th ed. rev.; New York: Longmans, Green and Company, 1899), 479.

³⁶ William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature, (4th ed. rev.; Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1957), p. 168.

³⁷ Hermann Cremer, Biblico-Theological Lexicon of New Testament Greek (4th Eng. ed.; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1962), p. 171.

³⁸ E.C.E. Owen, "Δαίμων and Cognate Words," pp. 147-49.

³⁹ James Hope Moulton and George Milligan, The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament Illustrated from the Papyri and other Non-literary Sources (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1963), p. 135.

Edersheim defines the term as "the idea of a permanent demoniac indwelling" and declares that this does not occur in the New Testament nor in Rabbinic literature. For him the key word appears to be "permanent," as he concedes that the Gospel records do refer to "the impression of sudden influence" which is thought to be the spiritual reaction to the Person and words of Christ.⁴⁰ Whether possession is temporary or permanent appears to be an open question. Ebrard has defined demon possession as "a misfortune which results from the fall and sinful condition of the race, and originates in the disturbing agency of dark powers upon a soul which is powerless to resist."⁴¹ A much more detailed definition is given by Eschenmeyer:

Possession . . . is that unnatural operation, in which one or more impure spirits through any sort of agency intrude into a human body, make themselves the masters of the instruments of sensation, of movement, and of speech; attach the power of the soul to them, and in shorter or longer paroxysms make themselves manifest in strange sounds, gestures, and movements, for the most part of a mocking, licentious, and violent kind.⁴²

Demon possession appears to describe the state of a person over which an alien power, known as a demon, is exercising demonic tyranny, controlling the mind and body of the person, not permanently perhaps, but intermittently, and to which he is subject.

⁴⁰ Edersheim, Life and Times of Jesus, p. 481.

⁴¹ Ebrard, "Demon, Demoniacs," Religious Encyclopaedia, ed. Philip Schaff, I (3rd ed. rev. & enl.; New York: Funk and Wagnalls Co., 1891), 624.

⁴² Eschenmeyer, Geschichte Besessener neuerer Zeit, p. 316, cited by Franz Delitzsch, A System of Biblical Psychology (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1899), p. 354.

Exorcise, Exorcism

The verb "exorcise"--Greek ἐξορκίζειν from ἐκ "out of," and ὀρκίζω "to cause to swear, bind by oath, adjure"--means "to drive out or drive away an evil spirit by means of a sacred name or magic rites" and is nowhere used in the New Testament to describe Jesus' method of casting out demons. Exorcism as "the expulsion of evil spirits by spells"⁴³ describes the ethnic and Jewish practice. Its absence in the New Testament accounts is significant, showing that Jesus differed from the prevailing Jewish ideas. The word ἐξορκισται is applied to certain Jewish exorcists in Acts 19:13 where the futility of the Jewish method to exorcise demons simply by taking over the name of Jesus is described. Even though the word 'exorcise' is used in a wider sense today, meaning 'to cast out demons,' because of the magical connotations associated with the word, the present writer prefers to use the word only to describe ethnic and Jewish practice. Jesus used ἐξέπαινον frequently when expelling demons from those who were possessed (Mark 1:25; 5:8; 9:25). Instead of 'exorcism' this researcher prefers 'expulsion.'

⁴³ L[udwig] B[lau], "Exorcism," Jewish Encyclopedia (1903), v, 305.

Chapter 2

ETHNIC AND JEWISH VIEWS OF DEMON POSSESSION

It has been argued that belief in demons and their activity came to full development among the Hebrews during the exile and after. On the other hand, Edward Langton declares, "A belief in demons . . . has been, and still is, characteristic of all the known peoples of the world."¹ Ethnic demonology may be said to be timeless. "That the Israelites from the earliest times, like every other race, peopled the world with innumerable unseen powers, cannot admit of doubt."² Alexander asserts that the Israelites in the Old Testament period had their "magic waters, oracular trees, divining rods, consultations of the Teraphim," and rejects the view that Jewish demonology could be traced to the influence of the exile. "When the people were carried into captivity, their mind was no mere tabula rasa awaiting the impress of Babylonian and Persian superstitions."³ Michael Gruenthaner, a Catholic theologian, speaking of the characteristics of Satan--a subject closely related to demonology--rejects the assertion that Persian

¹Edward Langton, Essentials of Demonology (London: Epworth Press, 1949), p. 1.

²W.O.E. Oesterley, "Demon, Demoniactal Possession, Demoniacs," A Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels, ed. James Hastings, II (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1921), 439.

³Wm. Menzies Alexander, Demonic Possession in the New Testament: Its Relations Historical, Medical, and Theological (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1902), p. 51.

demonology affected the Biblical concepts, and sees these characteristics already contained in the Edenic Serpent and in the Book of Job (dating of Job as post-Exilic has been disputed). Therefore, the Jews did not need any imported influence to conceive his personality.⁴ On the other hand, it would seem that the popular belief of the Jews was influenced by the beliefs of their Canaanite neighbours. Certainly there is every reason to suppose that there were germinal ideas of demonology prevalent among the early Hebrews, and their contact with the surrounding nations must have had further impact upon their beliefs. Because of their strong monotheistic belief, the early Hebrews tended to exclude references to the activity of demons and saw everything that occurred from an ultra-monotheistic point of view.

In this chapter the views and development of belief in demon possession will be traced, firstly in the Old Testament period, and then in the Inter-Testamental period. In the period covered by the Old Testament, ethnic demonology also will be examined. Then, in the Inter-Testamental period, the expansion of Jewish demonology in the rabbinic literature will be considered, and the impact of other literature will be noted. This chapter is intended to provide a background for the study of the teaching in the Synoptic Gospels.

⁴Michael Gruenthaner, "The Demonology of the Old Testament," Catholic Biblical Quarterly, VI (January, 1944), 19.

IN THE OLD TESTAMENT PERIOD

The Babylonian and Assyrian religion was noted for its belief in the existence and activity of evil spirits, as evidenced by the magical and incantation texts which have come to light.⁵

Ethnic Demonology

Number of demons. The ancient Assyrians and Babylonians believed in the existence of good and evil spirits. The demons commanded an influential role in the affairs of men. These demons were everywhere, lurking in every corner and waiting for their prey.⁶ "They enter a man's dwelling, they wander through the streets, they make their way into food and drink. There is no place, however small, which they cannot invade, and none, however large, that they cannot fill."⁷ The Arabs so thickly populated the desert with their Jinn that, when they threw anything away, they made apology to the Jinn, in case they should hit some of them. Also when an Arab poured water on the ground, or lowered a bucket down a well, he was sure to mutter superstitiously, 'Permission, ye blessed.'⁸

⁵ Langton, Essentials of Demonology, p. 11.

⁶ Robert William Rogers, The Religion of Babylonia and Assyria especially in its Relations to Israel (New York: Eaton and Mains, 1908), p. 145.

⁷ Morris Jastrow, The Religion of Babylonia and Assyria, Handbooks on the History of Religions (Boston: Ginn and Company, 1898), p. 261.

⁸ Alexander, Demonic Possession, p. 43.

Classes of demons. Jastrow declares that there were various kinds of demons with various grades of power. He deduces this from the names given to the demons, e.g. utukku and shedu which suggests greatness and strength as their chief characteristic.⁹ The ancients always pictured the demon as having some shape, animal or human. Among animals, serpents and scorpions were favorite forms.¹⁰ Alexander suggests that the demons may have been anthropomorphic but were capable of changing their shape as the occasion required.¹¹ Jastrow also distinguishes several classes of demons. Firstly, there were the demons who caused disease and physical vexation. Next, there were the demons who were thought to inhabit the fields. Serpents and scorpions were numbered among these. Finally, there was a class of demons who were said to haunt burial grounds and tombs. They stood in a certain relation to the demons that tormented the living.¹²

Abodes of demons. Among the Arabs, the desert was believed to be the peculiar dwelling place of demons. The Arabs were convinced that the shrill, weird variety of sounds heard in the desert were caused by demons.¹³ The Babylonians believed that the demons inhabited the city streets, the rivers, the seas and the mountain-tops; they swarmed everywhere. The Jinn of the Arabs haunted the places where

⁹Jastrow, op. cit., p. 260.

¹⁰Ibid., pp. 262-63.

¹¹Alexander, loc. cit.

¹²Jastrow, op. cit., pp. 181-82.

¹³Langton, op. cit., p. 5.

water lay, and the Babylonians and Jews were assured that the Shedim howled in the wilderness.¹⁴

Activities of Demons. Apparently, particular demons had their special times of activity. It appears that superstitious people so multiplied their numbers that the demons were active both day and night. Among all ethnic groups night was everywhere regarded as the most appropriate time for demonic activity. Because the people were constantly afraid of ambushes and demonic attacks, they devised and took refuge in charms and incantations in order to frighten the demons away.¹⁵ To these demons all sorts of calamities were ascribed--a headache, toothache, a burning fever, a broken bone, and even outbursts of jealousy and anger.¹⁶ Demons, because of their evil disposition, were reputed to be the cause of accidents and diseases. The Babylonians believed that disease was caused by inhaling or swallowing stray demons. The ancient Egyptians were of the opinion that thirty-six demons were associated with the thirty-six regions of the body. The Arab attributed his insanity and epilepsy to the Jinn.¹⁷ Among the Babylonians special demons were associated with certain diseases, e.g. Namtar was the plague demon, and Ashakku, the demon of wasting

¹⁴Alexander, op. cit., p. 45.

¹⁵Ibid., pp. 45-46.

¹⁶Rogers, The Religion of Babylonia, p. 145.

¹⁷Alexander, loc. cit.

disease.¹⁸ It was commonly believed that demons of sickness might enter the body through the agency and malignity of other people. The idea suggested was that of casting a spell of 'black magic' over other people. These activities were so frequent that the second section of the Code of Hammurabi attacked this practice.¹⁹ Sayce declares that all sickness was attributed to demon possession and suggests possible reasons: "the demon had been eaten with the food, or drunk with water, or breathed in with the air, and until he could be expelled there was no chance of recovery."²⁰ Deissman concludes from his examination of the London Papyrus No. 121 that the ancients popularly believed that the tongue of a dumb person was bound by the demon. In his opinion this conclusion fitted in with the common views of the time.²¹

Possession and Exorcism. In every period of Babylonian history it was recognized that sickness was caused by a demon which entered into people and took possession of them. As Rogers points out, "There could be no return of the precious boon of good health until the demon

¹⁸A.H. Sayce, Lectures on the Origin and Growth of Religion as illustrated by the religion of the Ancient Babylonians, The Hibbert Lectures, 1887 (London and Edinburgh: Williams and Norgate, 1888), p. 310. Also, M. Jastrow, op. cit., p. 260.

¹⁹George A. Barton, "Possession (Semitic and Christian)," Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, X, 133.

²⁰Sayce, loc. cit.

²¹Adolf Deissmann, Light from the Ancient East: The New Testament Illustrated by recently discovered Texts of the Graeco-Roman World, trans. by Lionel R.M. Strachan (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1910), p. 310.

was exorcised, and it was to the exorcising of demons that so large . . . a part of the religious literature of Babylon was devoted."²² The theory of attributing possession to cases of lunacy and idiocy was quite natural. The ancients had untutored, unscientific minds, and in order to account for this phenomenon, they suggested that a demon, a wicked spirit had taken possession of the person and caused him to do such bizarre things. Alexander declares, "On ethnic principles, the conduct of the possessed was the clue to the character of the possessing demon."²³ While the Babylonians distinguished one demon from another, recognizing them by the disease, the cure was wrought by exorcising the demon from the body. The following incantation text addressed to a demon illustrates this:

'Out! Out! Far away! Far away!
 Shame! Shame! Perish! Perish!
 Turn the body! Out! Far away!
 From my body go out!
 From my body far away!
 From my body, for shame!
 From my body, perish!
 From my body turn!
 From my body thy body!
 Into my body do not return!
 To my body do not approach!
 In my body do not dwell!
 On my body do not press!
 By Shamash, the mighty, be exorcized!
 By Ea, lord of all, be exorcized!
 By Marduk, chief exorcizer of the gods, be exorcized!

²²Rogers, The Religion of Babylonia, p. 145.

²³Alexander, Demonic Possession, p. 122.

By the fire-god, who burns you, be exorcized!
From my body be ye separated!'²⁴

From a very old Babylonian religious text, Barton also cites an incantation said to be from the time of the dynasty of Akkad (c. 2800-2600 B.C.):

'Enlil declares to him:
"Gone is the sickness from the face of the land."
As a protector he removes it,--
Enlil's are they,--
As a protector he removed it.'²⁵

The exorcist who was a priest appealed to the superior gods to help him in the conflict to achieve deliverance. The god appealed to was thought to be more powerful than the demon. Great emphasis was placed upon the fire-god, and frequently along with the incantation there was the symbolic burning of objects, images of witches, etc.²⁶ The name of the god seemed to be important also. Every incantation text appealed to the god or gods by name, and the underlying idea suggested seemed to indicate that knowledge of the name meant knowledge of the god, and used along with the right formula, forced the god to act on the exorcist's behalf. In ancient times, great stress was placed upon the efficacy of magical formulae to bring release to those possessed. The power to exorcize demons was believed to be resident in the words of

²⁴George A. Barton, "Possession (Semitic and Christian)," ERE, X, 133, citing K.L. Tallqvist, Die Assyrische Beschwörungsserie Maqlû, Tafel V, 166-184.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Jastrow, Religion of Babylonia, pp. 276ff.

the formulae themselves, and this led to great stress being put on words, along with the correct performance of the prescribed ritual. If the magical formula did not work, recourse was found in the incorrect recital of the words, or in the ritual. "Hence there grew up a zealous and earnest determination to preserve exactly the words which in some cases had brought healing, and to keep a careful record of the exact words used."²⁷

In Babylonian thought it was believed that the name of a demon should be known and mentioned before that demon could be cast out. In the East generally, names have great significance. Lack of a name implies non-existence. Thus if the name means the person, then to know the name is in some way to know the person and this leads to a measure of control over the person. Conybeare, writing on the use of the name, says that the unseen powers are obliged to come when they are called.²⁸ Sayce declares that the name and the person were inseparable among the Chaldeans. "The name . . . was the personality, and whatever happened to the name would happen equally to the personality."²⁹ Thus, the exorciser, seeking to bring release to a person, would invoke the gods, goddesses, and spirits to set the person free. If the exorciser is fortunate to call on the right god, that is, the one who has power over

²⁷Rogers, The Religion of Babylonia, p. 146.

²⁸Conybeare, "Christian Demonology," The Jewish Quarterly Review, IX (1897), 64.

²⁹Sayce, Lectures, p. 302.

the possessing demon, then the object would be accomplished. Using the correct words, pronouncing the right names, performing the proper ceremony, bringing the correct sacrifice, all of these are necessary conditions for successful exorcism.³⁰ "Incantations and cryptic formulae are universal among exorcists; the more meaningless, apparently the better."³¹

Jewish Demonology

The Old Testament does not attempt to formulate a doctrine of demons. In fact, very little is said about the subject owing to the pre-occupation with monotheism. In this section it is proposed to examine the main words--Seirim, Shedim, Lilith and the Serpent--associated with demons, and then to trace some allusions to demons possession in the Old Testament Scriptures.

Seirim (שֵׁרִים). This word occurs in Leviticus 17:7; II Chronicles 11:15; Isaiah 13:21; and Isaiah 34:14, being translated "satyrs" (RSV) in each place. The name suggests that they were hairy, goat-like creatures.³² Robertson Smith notes that in Babylonian

³⁰Jastrow, Religion of Babylonia, pp. 292f.

³¹Alexander, Demonic Possession, p. 48.

³²William Gesenius, A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament, ed. F. Brown, S.R. Driver and C.A. Briggs (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), p. 972.

thought the demons were set forth as hairy beings.³³ The Bible tells us that they inhabited ruined and desolate places "and were given there to wild demoniac prancing."³⁴ The Leviticus passage (17:1-7) indicates that the Israelites were forbidden to go out into the desert and slaughter their sacrificial animals in honor of the Seirim. While it appears that the Israelites imagined them to be goat-like in some way, it is generally thought that they were demons because "their cult was abhorrent to Yahweh."³⁵ A careful examination of the Isaianic passages seems to indicate that the reference is not simply to natural animals. Moffatt, in the present writer's opinion, captures the true meaning of Isaiah 34:14, translating thus, " . . . and demon calls to demon [דִּמּוֹן]; there vampires [לִילִית] settle and make themselves a home." The mention of Seirim along with Lilith "implies that they are viewed as belonging to the same category of supernatural or demonic creatures."³⁶

Shedim (שְׁדִים). This word occurs twice (Deuteronomy 32:17; Psalm 106:37) in the Old Testament and may be traced to "the Akkadian

³³W. Robertson Smith, The Religion of the Semites (new ed.; London: Adam and Charles Black, 1901), p. 120.

³⁴Julian Morgenstern, "Demons," The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia (1941), III, 531.

³⁵M. Gruenthaner, "The Demonology of the Old Testament," Catholic Biblical Quarterly, VI (January, 1944), 22.

³⁶Langton, Essentials of Demonology, p. 39.

šēdu, 'protective (or adverse) daimon.'" ³⁷ Thus they were found in the form of winged bulls, keeping guard at the entrances to temples. ³⁸ However, Jastrow cites an incantation mentioning the Shedu who were associated with other evil demons, thus indicating that the term had an evil significance also. ³⁹ In Deuteronomy 32:17 (RSV) the fathers were said to have "sacrificed to demons which were no gods" and Psalm ^{106:37} 107:37 tells us that the Israelites immolated their sons and daughters to the demons. The Old Testament references are obscure in that it is uncertain whether the Shedim are foreign gods, i.e. demons, or a class of beings distinct from these gods, but still thought to be demons. ⁴⁰ Speaking of these passages, Gilmore thinks they "are best suited by the supposition that offerings of an avertive character are here referred to, and that . . . actual demons were conceived as objects of worship." ⁴¹

Lilith (לִּילִית). This word occurs in Isaiah 34:14 and may be compared with the Babylonian demon lilu meaning "night-spirit" and especially the feminine form lilītu. Jastrow suggests that the name indicated the particular time of their activity: they operated at

³⁷ T.H. Gaster, "Demon," The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, I, 818.

³⁸ Langton, op. cit., p. 51.

³⁹ Jastrow, Religion of Babylonia, p. 261.

⁴⁰ Gruenthaner, op. cit., pp. 22-23.

⁴¹ George W. Gilmore, "Demon, Demonism," The New Shaff-Herzog Encyclopedia, III, 400.

night.⁴² Lilith requires particular treatment because she was thought to have human form, and also because of her prominence in Rabbinic literature. Moffatt translates the word as "vampires," while the RSV renders it as "night hag." Langton associates the reference in Psalm 91:5 to "the terror of the night" (RSV) with the demon Lilith.⁴³

The Serpent. Langton, speaking of the Serpent in Genesis 3, is convinced that the Serpent belongs to the category of demonic animals.⁴⁴ It has been noted that the Arabs and Babylonians conceived the demons as having the form of a serpent. "The demonic character of the serpent appears in his possession of occult divine knowledge . . . and in his use of that knowledge to seduce man from his allegiance to his Creator."⁴⁵ Gruenthaner goes even further. From Genesis 3 he concludes that the Serpent is evil and a spirit who is assisted by a horde of evil beings in his warfare against the human race. Speaking of these evil beings and referring particularly to verse 15 he says, "We are not told who they are, but since they are said to be his seed, we conclude that they are in the main evil spirits."⁴⁶

⁴²Jastrow, Religion of Babylonia, pp. 260, 262.

⁴³Langton, op. cit., p. 47.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 37.

⁴⁵John Skinner, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Genesis, The International Critical Commentary (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1917), p. 72.

⁴⁶M. Gruenthaner, "The Demonology of the Old Testament," p. 13.

Traces of Demon Possession

The case of Saul. In I Samuel 16:14 (RSV) it is said, "Now the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD tormented him." Again, I Samuel 18:10 (RSV) "And on the morrow an evil spirit from God rushed upon Saul, and he raved within his house. . . ." Also, I Samuel 19:9 (RSV) states, "Then an evil spirit from the LORD came upon Saul, as he sat in his house with his spear in his hand."

One view commonly held is that up to the time of the Exile there was no trace of possession by demons, because in Hebrew thought there was no differentiation between good and evil spirits. They were considered non-ethical. Men regarded the spirits as good or bad depending on the mission they were sent to accomplish, that is, for the blessing or injury of mankind. Barton therefore would explain the above references to Saul as referring to melancholia or insanity. He suggests, "The evil spirit came from Jahweh, just as the spirit of Jahweh did, but it was evil because its effects were different . . . His possession by this spirit was believed to be the cause of his darkened reason."⁴⁷ Wright also suggests the possibility that evil has "no moral connotation here, but signifies depression."⁴⁸

⁴⁷George A. Barton, "Possession (Semitic and Christian)," ERE (1919), X, 135.

⁴⁸J.S. W[right], "Possession," New Bible Dictionary, p. 1011.

However, the suggestion that "the evil spirit" refers to God Himself as exerting power and effecting evil in men is inconsistent with the demonology of the time. According to Moss, "These spirits are not represented as constituting the personal energy of God, but as under His control," albeit some say it was direct control, but others only permissive.⁴⁹ Nevertheless, Moss himself would view the evil spirit as a messenger of God sent to punish evil, and only later was he thought of as a personal, evil spirit working against God.⁵⁰ It seems appropriate here to point out that the Hebrews did not recognize any secondary causation. While it is common today to distinguish between God's direct will and God's permissive will, the Hebrew writers felt no necessity to make this distinction. To do so, would have absolved God of the responsibility for evil.

Gruenthaner notes that on one occasion when Saul was attacked, he prophesied (I Samuel 18:10). In this passage the Hithpael of חָלַל is used "showing that in speech or in gesture or in both he acted like a prophet, i.e., like a man under preternatural influence."⁵¹ However, Saul's behaving like a prophet does not prove his possession by an evil spirit. Rather it is suggested that Saul's symptoms were "recurring

⁴⁹ R.W. Moss, "Evil Spirits," Dictionary of the Bible, ed. James Hastings (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1909), p. 248. Italics, thesis writer.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Gruenthaner, "Demonology of the Old Testament," p. 23.

attacks of depressive mania," and the evil spirit from the Lord is viewed as a mental disturbance permitted by God.⁵² It is interesting to observe that Josephus, speaking of Saul, says that "some strange and demoniacal disorders came upon him,"⁵³ and later he declares that the demons which seized Saul, David was able to cast out; thus Josephus attributes demon possession to Saul.⁵⁴ Alexander declares, "the case of Saul is undoubtedly to be regarded as one of possession by an evil spirit."⁵⁵

Certain similarities may be noted between the action of the evil spirit (I Samuel 16:16; 18:10; 19:9) and the action of the Holy Spirit (Numbers 24:2; Judges 3:10; I Samuel 10:6; II Chronicles 15:1; Isaiah 11:2). The terminology of the accounts would indicate that Saul was subject to demonic activity. It would appear that Saul's continued deliberate disobedience to the will of God left him susceptible and open to an invading evil spirit. He exposed himself to demonic attack. If a person has been yielded and open to the Spirit of God charismatically, and then becomes deliberately disobedient, he is exposed, and an evil spirit is liable to enter.⁵⁶ It is the present writer's opinion that the case of Saul is very probably that of demon possession.

⁵² Ibid., p. 24.

⁵³ Flavius Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews, VI: viii: 2.

⁵⁴ Ibid., VI: xi: 2.

⁵⁵ Alexander, Demonic Possession, p. 20.

⁵⁶ J.S. Wright, NBD, pp. 1010-11.

Other possible references. Deuteronomy 18:9ff. mentions the Divine ban on the occult practices. This ban indicates that demonic practices were familiar and prevalent among the Canaanites. The warning given would suggest that the Israelites too, were not immune from dabbling in these demonic practices. In Babylon those engaged in these occult practices were deeply involved in the activities of demons, including demon possession.

The Old Testament idea of possession seems to have included the belief that possession by the spirit of a departed person was possible. In I Samuel 28 the 'medium' at Endor whom Saul consulted, seemed to be possessed by the spirit of Samuel, for in I Samuel 28:15-19 the woman spoke to Saul as though she were Samuel.⁵⁷

Cheyne concedes that the doctrine of 'disease-possession' may have been taught in pre-exilic times, but thinks that with the later exposure to foreign influences, "this doctrine attained its full dimensions."⁵⁸ When the purpose and overwhelming concern of the Old Testament writers, a thorough-going monotheism, is understood, then the references to demonology are not insignificant.

IN THE INTER-TESTAMENTAL PERIOD

During this period there was a marked development in Jewish

⁵⁷George A. Barton, "Possession (Semitic and Christian)," ERE, X, 135.

⁵⁸T.K. C[heyne], "Demons," Encyclopaedia Biblica (1899), I, 1074.

demonology, due, in large measure, to the contact with other nations of the period. Nevertheless, there was development even within the Hebrew religion, especially after the return from exile. In this section the Rabbinic literature will first be examined, as demonology in general is accorded a prominent place by the mainstream Judaism of this period. Then the other literatures of the period will be considered: Persian, Greek, apocryphal and apocalyptic. While the demonology of the various literatures will be investigated, the emphasis will be placed on the references to demon possession. It is noted that the Persian literature has influenced the Jewish and Biblical concept of Satan, but space forbids the present writer to examine the relation and development of this concept.

Rabbinic Literature

It is acknowledged that the Jewish rabbinic literature belongs to a much later date than the period now being considered. Nevertheless, the writer concurs with the commonly accepted view that the literature now available is the repository of many beliefs which have come down from time immemorial.⁵⁹ Different attitudes regarding demonology have been taken by the rabbis. Some took the reality of demons for granted, others completely denied the reality of demonic forces. Demonology was much more popular in Galilee than in Judaea. Was this diversity of

⁵⁹For a contrary view see Samuel Sandmel, The First Christian Century in Judaism and Christianity: Certainties and Uncertainties (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969).

views dependent on the background and environment of the rabbis concerned? It may well be so. It is also known that the Sadducees rejected belief in demonology.⁶⁰ Yet Kohler reports not only widespread belief in magic formulae for subduing demons, but also that "the Jewish exorcists found a fertile soil everywhere for the cultivation of . . . their magic."⁶¹

Origin and number of demons. Various ideas have been suggested regarding the origin of demons. One tradition said that they were created on the eve of the first Sabbath,⁶² but before their bodies could be prepared the Sabbath dawned, and as a result they remained spirits.⁶³ Another suggestion was that their species was propagated through the cohabitation of Adam with Lilith, the queen of the female demons, or that of Eve with the Shedim (male spirits).⁶⁴ Being male and female, the spirits could reproduce their kind.⁶⁵ Demons were also said to originate from the backbone of him who had not bent in worship.⁶⁶

⁶⁰A[lfred] B[arry], "Demoniac," Dr. William Smith's Dictionary of the Bible, rev. and ed. H.B. Hackett, I (New York: Hurd and Houghton, 1877), 585.

⁶¹K[aufmann Kohler], "Demonology," Jewish Encyclopedia (1903), IV, 519.

⁶²Pes. 54a.

⁶³Ber. R. VII.

⁶⁴Eruv. 18b; Ber. R. XX.

⁶⁵Ḥag. 16a.

⁶⁶B. K. 16a.

As to number, demons abounded everywhere. They surrounded man like the ridge around a field; he had thousands of them at his side.⁶⁷ Lilith, the female demon, roamed about with eighteen myriads in her train,⁶⁸ and three hundred species of male demons were also referred to in the Talmud.⁶⁹ The air was full of them, and they swarmed in the house and in the field.⁷⁰

Classes and forms of demons. The rabbis divided the demons or hurtful ones (יְדֻיּוֹת) into two classes: "one composed of purely spiritual beings, the other of half-spirits (halbgeister)."⁷¹ According to another classification, the classes of demons were determined by their times of activity. They were grouped into four classes according to the divisions of the day: morning, midday, evening, and night spirits. The morning and evening spirits were least destructive; the night demons were the most malignant and most dangerous.⁷² Adults and children were not safe out of their homes at night. It was a little safer under moonlight. Nevertheless, it was believed that the demons would injure those who left their homes at night.⁷³

⁶⁷ Bek. 6a; cf. Ps. 91 : 5ff.

⁶⁸ Pes. 112b.

⁶⁹ Git. 68a.

⁷⁰ Ber. R. XX.

⁷¹ Alexander, Demonic Possession, p. 25; also W.O.E. Oesterley, "Demon, Demoniactal Possession, Demoniacs," A Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels, ed. James Hastings, I (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1921), 439.

⁷² Ibid., p. 30.

⁷³ Pes. 112b.

The Talmud says that the demons possess six attributes. Three of these are shared with angels: they are winged, they fly from one corner of the world to the other, they know the future. The other three are shared with mankind: they eat and drink, they multiply, and they die like men.⁷⁴ They are mostly human in form but could assume other forms when necessary, it seems,⁷⁵ and they are said to have the feet of fowls. If fine ashes are spread on the floor at night, it is possible to see their footprints in the morning.⁷⁶ Those dwelling in the caper bushes are blind.⁷⁷ According to Jewish belief certain animals such as serpents, asses, mosquitoes, and bulls are in league with demons.⁷⁸ It seems that these are due to various ethnic influences.

Abodes of demons. They were believed to inhabit all places. According to the Talmud, "Shabrire," the demon of blindness, rests on the surface of drinking water at night and strikes with blindness those who try to drink of it.⁷⁹ Cemeteries are common dwelling places,⁸⁰ and it is said that a medium may fast and spend the night in the cemetery so that an unclean spirit may rest upon him to help him tell the

⁷⁴Hag. 16a.

⁷⁵Yeb. 122a; Giṭ. 66a.

⁷⁶Ber. 6a; Giṭ. 68b.

⁷⁷Pes. 111b.

⁷⁸Oesterley, op. cit., p. 440.

⁷⁹Pes. 112a; ' A.Z. 12b.

⁸⁰Nid. 17a.

future.⁸¹ Certain trees are said to be the haunt of demons;⁸² also, ruins and the desert are favorite places,⁸³ and Tiberias is specially mentioned as their abode.⁸⁴ In the Old Testament demons like the Seirim and Lilith are pictured as inhabiting ruins (Isaiah 13:20-22; 34:13-14).

Activities of demons. To the demons, viewed as workers of harm, were ascribed various diseases: asthma,⁸⁵ rabies (delirious fever and madness happening to man and beast),⁸⁶ croup,⁸⁷ leprosy,⁸⁸ blindness,⁸⁹ and epilepsy as well as madness.⁹⁰ Demons were said to send bad dreams,⁹¹ and to persuade a person to eat the unleavened bread.⁹² Because an individual may be tormented by an evil spirit, he may afflict himself with fasting.⁹³

Possession and exorcism. In the Talmud a story is told of two rabbis who travelled to Rome, seeking to have a bill repealed. On the ship they encountered a demon, Ben Temalion by name, who offered to accompany them. Hoping that the demon might help them in their business

⁸¹Sanh. 65b.

⁸³Ber. 3a.

⁸⁵Bek. 44b.

⁸⁷Yom. 77b; Ta'an. 20b.

⁸⁹Pes. 112a; 'A. Z. 12b.

⁹¹Ber. 55b.

⁹³Ta'an. 22b.

⁸²Pes. 111a, b.

⁸⁴Ber. 62a.

⁸⁶Yom. 83b.

⁸⁸Hor. 10a.

⁹⁰Shab. 67a.

⁹²R. H. 28a.

they agreed. When they reached Rome the demon possessed Caesar's daughter. When the rabbis discovered this they exorcised the demon ('Ben Temalion leave her, Ben Temalion leave her'), and as a result the Emperor offered them anything they desired. The rabbis were led into the treasure house where they found the bill and tore it to pieces.⁹⁴

The Jews employed various methods and approaches in their efforts to relieve the oppressed. Some attempted to coax the demons and persuade them to leave, while others sought to drive out the demons by creating horrid smelling fumigations. The exorcists also attempted to terrorize the demons, using a ring or a special root along with a magical incantation, and adjuring the demon to depart.⁹⁵ These methods were very similar to those employed by other nations, and it would appear that the Jews, to a large extent, were particularly influenced by the Babylonians.

As the Babylonians carried amulets about the person to ward off the attacks of demons, so the Jews did likewise. Jastrow mentions that the ring was used as an amulet and it is very probable that the custom of carrying inscribed tablets, discs, or knobs about the person was for protection against demons.⁹⁶ Among the Jews amulets were commonly used

⁹⁴Me'il. 17b.

⁹⁵Alexander, Demonic Possession, pp. 126-28.

⁹⁶Jastrow, Religion of Babylonia, p. 672.

either to prevent or cure disease. Usually an amulet was composed of a piece of parchment on which certain magical words were written. Sometimes it was a bundle of plants or herbs purported to have healing properties.⁹⁷

While the Jews recognized the prevailing fear of demons, they insisted that the observance of the Law was the best prophylactic against demons. The wearing of the Tefillin (regarded as an amulet), the fixing of the Mezuzah on the doorpost, the reading of the Shema with the name of God mentioned and affirmed, and the wearing of the Zizit (fringes) were regarded by the rabbis as safeguards against all evil powers.⁹⁸ The Pharisees believed that every observance of the Law was a protection against demons.⁹⁹ Psalm 91 should be repeated each night before falling asleep.¹⁰⁰ It is stated that covenant salt (Leviticus 2:13; Numbers 18:19) should be taken at every meal as a protection against demons.¹⁰¹ The rabbis taught that a man should not drink water from rivers or pools at night because of the danger of blindness. If thirsty and alone, and in order to protect himself against a demonic attack, he should repeat the incantation: "O So-and-so, my mother told me, 'Beware of Shabrire:' Shabrire, brire, rire,

⁹⁷Shab. 61a; Kid. 73b.

⁹⁸Kohler, "Demonology," Jewish Encyclopedia, IV, 519.

⁹⁹Soṭ. 21a.

¹⁰⁰Sheb. 15b.

¹⁰¹Ber. 40a.

ire, re, I am thirsty for water in a white glass."¹⁰² According to Rashi, the demon became weaker and weaker as each syllable of his name was dropped, and at the last the demon fled in terror. Langton observes that this was "a marked feature of Babylonian magic and sorcery."¹⁰³

Very often magical incantations were used to induce the departure of diseases from the sick. For example, it was suggested that a person suffering from night blindness, should take a string of white hair and tie one of his legs to a dog's leg. Then children should rattle potsherds behind him and say, 'Old dog, stupid cock.' Also seven pieces of raw meat from seven houses were to be taken and put on the doorpost; then let the dog eat them on the garbage heap. Finally, the string should be untied with the words, 'Blindness of A, son of the woman B, leave A, son of the woman B,' and they should blow in the dog's eye.¹⁰⁴ The intricate ritual along with the incantations appeared to be a necessary and essential part of the exorcism. An incantation for abscesses and ulcers was followed by an incantation against a demon.¹⁰⁵ An incantation against the evil eye is also mentioned.¹⁰⁶

It was universally believed that the names of gods used in incantations resulted in the power of these gods being at the command of the magician. The Jews similarly believed that the person who knew

¹⁰² Pes. 112a; 'A.Z. 12b.

¹⁰³ Langton, Essentials of Demonology, p. 24.

¹⁰⁴ Git. 69a.

¹⁰⁵ Shab. 67a.

¹⁰⁶ Ber. 55b.

the secret of "the Name" was capable of performing all manner of miracles. The secrecy that shrouded the Divine Name, suggested a god with a very powerful spell.

Other Literature

Origin and number of demons. The Jewish apocalyptic writings seem to have further developed the ideas expressed in the rabbinic literature. There the fallen angels lusted after the daughters of men, and in turn this produced a race of giants who turned into evil spirits (I Enoch 6-7; 15:8-12; II Enoch 18; Jubilees 4:22; 5:1-2).

The influence of Persian demonology upon the Jewish views is generally supposed,¹⁰⁷ but to what extent still appears uncertain. According to the Zend-Avesta, the hosts of evil were legion (Yast IV.2),¹⁰⁸ indicating similarity of outlook in Persia and among the Jews. In Greek thought the Pythagoreans thought of demons as representing the souls of the dead. The whole air was full of souls which were called demons or heroes, which sent dreams and the signs of sickness and health.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷George Foot Moore, Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era, II (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1944), 394.

¹⁰⁸James Darmesteter (trans.), The Zend-Avesta: Part II, Vol. XXIII, The Sacred Books of the East (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1883), p. 49.

¹⁰⁹Pythagoras, Diag. Laert, viii.22 cited by A.C. Pearson, "Demons and Spirits (Greek)," ERE, IV, 593.

Classes and forms of demons. In Persian thought there was little order and organization among the demons. At the head of the host was Angra Mainyu or Ahriman, the prince of darkness personified. Next in power to Ahriman were six arch-fiends who were the commanders of the legions of sin. Then there was a separate class, a confused horde of wicked spirits.¹¹⁰ In the apocalyptic writings the demons are said to be subject to prince Mastema or Satan (Jubilees 10:8). In Greek thought the demons held an intermediate position between men and gods. To the demons who lived long but were not immortal like the gods, were attributed all the derogatory characteristics of the national deities. Whitehouse is convinced that Greek influence stimulated the growth of Hebrew angelology and demonology.¹¹¹ Persian influence is also apparent, for they thought of demons as spirits or bodiless agents. Sometimes they were described as having human form in order to accomplish their devilish ends.¹¹²

Abodes of demons. In Persian thought, too, their special abode was thought to be in close proximity to corpses and in lonely places.¹¹³ In the apocalyptic writings Raphael cast the demon Azazel into a place of darkness in the desert (I Enoch 10:4f.). Satanail,

¹¹⁰A.V. Williams Jackson, "Demons and Spirits (Persian)," ERE, IV, 619.

¹¹¹Owen C. Whitehouse, "Demon, Devil," A Dictionary of the Bible, ed. James Hastings, I, 592.

¹¹²Jackson, loc. cit.

¹¹³Ibid.

as the name of the chief power of evil, is pictured as "flying in the air continuously above the bottomless" (II Enoch 29:5; cf. Eph. 2:2; 6:12). Being also called 'the devil,' he is "the spirit of the lower places" (II Enoch 31:4). It is noted in these writings that the concept of demon chiefs, such as Azazel and Satan is now being closely associated with demons.

Activities of demons. The Persians believed that the demons caused all kinds of sickness (Vendidad XX.3),¹¹⁴ and Angra Mainyu worked against Ahura Mazda by introducing innumerable diseases (Vendidad XXII.2:9,15).¹¹⁵ In Greek beliefs, mysterious happenings were often attributed to the work of demons. Sometimes drastic means were used to deal with harmful demons, as when Apollonius of Tyana stoned the pest demon.¹¹⁶ The Greeks also held the view that illnesses might be traced to demons.¹¹⁷ The κῆρες (ghosts or sprites) were thought to be the cause of madness.¹¹⁸ According to the apocalyptic writings, especially Jubilees and I Enoch, the demons were to harass

¹¹⁴James Darmesteter (trans.), The Zend-Avesta: Part I Vendidad, 2nd ed. Vol. IV, The Sacred Books of the East (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1895), p. 227.

¹¹⁵Ibid., pp. 238-39.

¹¹⁶Philostratus, Vit. Ap., IV, 10, 147f. cited by Foerster, "δαίμων, δαιμόνιον," TDNT, II, 7.

¹¹⁷Ibid.

¹¹⁸Langton, Essentials of Demonology, p. 82.

and dominate men, bring moral ruin on the earth by seducing man,¹¹⁹
tempt men to witch-craft, and peer into hidden mysteries and
idolatry.¹²⁰

Possession and exorcism. In the apocalyptic writings there is the suggestion that the devil took possession of Eve and spoke through her lips to persuade Adam to eat the forbidden fruit (Apoc. Mosis 21:3). There is no other mention of demon possession in apocalyptic literature.

The Greek magical papyri show that the magicians were aware of the secrecy of the Divine Name. As everybody knew, the secret name of a god suggested that the god possessed a powerful spell. Because the barbarous names of the gods were more efficacious than familiar ones, the magicians took advantage of the influence and mysterious secrecy surrounding the Jewish scriptures. As a result, "we find the authors of the magic books acquainted with the pronunciation of the tetragrammaton, which they concealed in an abracadabra of variations."¹²¹
A Greek papyrus states,

In order to drive out a demon one must take an unripe olive, together with certain plants, and murmur some magic words over them, among the words used being ταω, the Greek

¹¹⁹R.H. Charles (ed.), The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament in English, II (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1913), pp. 10, 185.

¹²⁰Foerster, op. cit., p. 15.

¹²¹Moore, Judaism, I, 426.

equivalent of the Hebraic Tetragrammaton. The exorcist says: "Go out [demon] from -----." Thereupon a phylactery is made from a piece of tin and is hung from the neck of the one possessed. The exorcist places himself in front of the one possessed and begins as follows: "I conjure thee in the name of the God of the Hebrews, Jesus, Jahaia," etc.¹²²

This illustrates many of the factors of exorcism: magical objects and preparations, name of the demon, a phylactery or amulet, and the use of the name of a superior god or gods. The healing by Apollonius of many who were possessed is mentioned by Philostratus.¹²³

The use of the name of Solomon was common among Jewish exorcists. Josephus relates a case which indicates the prevalence of belief in demon possession among the Jews, and also illustrates the methods employed by the exorcists. In speaking of the wisdom of Solomon, Josephus says, "God enabled him to learn the skill which expels demons. . . . And he left behind him the manner of using exorcisms, by which they drive away demons, so that they never return." Josephus then tells how Eleazer, a fellow-countryman exorcised a demon while in the presence of Vespasian.

The manner of the cure was this: He put a ring that had a root of one of those sorts mentioned by Solomon, to the nostrils of the demoniac, after which he drew out the demon through his nostrils; and when the man fell down immediately, he adjured him to return into him no more, making still mention of Solomon, and reciting the incantations which he composed. And when Eleazer would persuade and demonstrate

¹²²L[udwig] B[lau], "Exorcism," Jewish Encyclopedia (1903), V, 305-6 citing Dietrich, "Abraxas," pp. 138 et seq.

¹²³Philostratus, *Vit. Ap.*, III, 38, 138; IV, 20, 157f. cited by Foerster, "δαίμων, δαίμόνιον," TDNT.

to the spectators that he had such power, he set a little way off a cup or basin full of water, and commanded the demon, as he went out of the man, to overturn it, and thereby let the spectators know that he had left the man; and when this was done, the skill and wisdom of Solomon was shown very manifestly.¹²⁴

Strangely, the Apocrypha has little to say on the subject. In the Book of Tobit an evil demon named Asmodaeus is mentioned who seemed to have peculiar control over Sarah, slaying her husbands before marriage could be consummated (Tobit 3:8). When Tobias objected to marrying Sarah because of the evil demon's activities, the angel Raphael instructed him to take the liver and heart of a fish which had been miraculously caught, burn it upon the ashes of incense before the person suffering from the demonic attack, and the smoke would drive the demon away (Tobit 6:7; 8:2-3). The demon fled because of fumigation. This indicates unrestrained imagination on the one hand, as well as the admixture of many speculations derived from the influence of the neighbouring peoples.

While there were traces of demonology among the Jews, as is depicted in the Old Testament, there appears to be little doubt that the demonology of the surrounding nations was a determining factor in its development among the Jews. The essential characteristics of demons and their activity were similar among the Jews and the other nations. The Rabbinic methods of exorcising demons demonstrated substantial agreement between Jewish and ethnic beliefs and mores.

¹²⁴ Josephus, Antiquities, VIII: ii: 5.

While it is obvious that external influences had a marked impact on Jewish demonology, it is equally certain that there was an indigenous development within the Hebrew religion. Gilmore has summed up the Semitic viewpoint: Demons

are responsible for the ills of the flesh, of the mentality, and of the spiritual life. They cause disease, abberation of mind, and perverseness towards the gods; they control the atmosphere and bring storms; by their mastery of the waters they bring floods and destruction; they enter the bodies of human beings, are especially dangerous to women and children, and at critical periods of life are alert to work them harm. They may be warded off by attention to the proper ritual, by the use of drugs and herbs, and by the potency of incantations and charms.¹²⁵

¹²⁵George W. Gilmore, "Demon, Demonism," The New Shaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge (1950), III, 399.

Chapter 3

THE TEACHING OF THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS ON DEMON POSSESSION

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the teaching of Jesus as it is presented in the Synoptic Gospels in deed and example, and in word and precept, since teaching is carried out not merely verbally, but also through acts. Firstly, the most important cases of demon possession will be investigated carefully; then the other references to possession will be summarized, with attention being focused upon the significant elements inherent in them. The second major section will be devoted to an examination of the verbal teaching of Jesus. Finally, the teaching of the Synoptics as a whole will be compared with contemporary beliefs.

SELECTED CASE STUDIES

The Capernaum Demoniac (Mark 1:23-28; Luke 4:33-37)

In Mark the incident is placed in the opening section of the ministry of Jesus (1:14-45). Mark 1:15 is a general statement summarizing the message of Jesus: "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe in the gospel." This means that Jesus proclaimed as good news the fact that the kingdom of God was imminent. The world was in a sad plight; man was under the rule of the demonic. "That which God had made and pronounced good had

become sick, demon-possessed, and Satan-dominated."¹ For Jesus, the kingdom of God meant the rule of God over this world and all its inhabitants. The kingdom meant the inauguration of the divine rule, with the express purpose to defeat the rule of the demonic, to recreate and restore the world that Satan had subjugated. Jesus' opening announcement indicated that the day had now dawned.

To this writer, the significance of the kingdom of God in relation to the demonic rule cannot be over-estimated for a proper understanding, not only of the incident before us, but of the demonic narratives in general. In Capernaum, following the opening announcement (vv. 14-15) and the calling of the first four disciples (vv. 16-20), Mark presents Jesus in His first engagement with the enemy, the demonic. It would appear that the demons knew very well why Jesus had come. He had come to encounter the demonic and bring wholeness to men. As the incident is recorded in both Mark and Luke, the text of Mark will be followed and the contributions of Luke which are not in Mark, will be noted. The English text quoted is the Revised Standard Version (RSV), unless otherwise stated.

Verse 23 εὐθὺς ἦν, "immediately there was." As this stands it does not make good English, unless "was" can mean "came, entered." Gould referring to εὐθὺς (vv. 21,23), says, "He [Jesus] was no sooner in the city than he entered the synagogue, and no sooner in the

¹James Kallas, The Significance of the Synoptic Miracles (Greenwich, Connecticut: The Seabury Press, 1961), p. 88.

synagogue than this demoniac appeared."² Alexander concludes that the demoniac was an intruder from without, whose appearance in the synagogue took the worshippers by surprise.³ Demoniacs would not normally be in a synagogue service, as being possessed by a spirit would make them unclean and hence ceremonially unacceptable.

ἄνθρωπος ἐν πνεύματι ἁκαθάρτῳ, "a man with an unclean spirit." Luke 4:33 has ἄνθρωπος ἔχων πνεῦμα δαιμονίου ἁκαθάρτου, "a man who had the spirit of an unclean demon." In Mark the man is in the unclean spirit's power, while Luke indicates that he has, in the sense of possesses, the unclean spirit. πνεύματι ἁκαθάρτῳ is a Jewish expression commonly used of demons in Rabbinic literature. Taylor suggests that the ἁκαθάρτον "represents a religious judgment on the part of the Evangelist rather than a special form of ceremonial impurity."⁴ It would appear that ἁκαθάρτον stands in antithesis to ἅγιος as applied to Jesus.

Verse 24. ἀνέκραξεν, "he cried out." This refers to the man not the spirit because the participle λέγων is masculine. Cf. Luke: "he cried out with a loud voice."

²Ezra P. Gould, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Mark, The International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1912), p. 22.

³Wm. Menzies Alexander, Demonic Possession in the New Testament: Its Relations Historical, Medical, and Theological (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1902), p. 66.

⁴Vincent Taylor, The Gospel According to St. Mark: The Greek Text with Introduction, Notes and Indexes (2nd ed.; London: Macmillan and Company Limited, 1966), pp. 173-74.

τί ἡμῖν καὶ σοί, literally "what to us and to you?"

(cf. 5:7; Matthew 8:29; 27:19; Luke 4:34; 8:28; John 2:4). Here it corresponds to the Hebrew and really means "Why dost thou meddle with us?"⁵ ἡμῖν refers to the class.⁶ It is not simply this demonic spirit, but the whole class of unclean spirits is involved. Another possible suggestion is that the plural may indicate the idea of multiple personality which is common in persons suffering from demon possession (cf. 5:9).

ἢ λθες ἀπολέσαι ἡμᾶς; "have you come to destroy us?"

Most commentators take this as a question, but some have viewed it as a defiant assertion: "you have come to destroy us!"⁷ Along with this latter view is expressed the idea that Jesus' coming was not to Capernaum, but into the world, and part of the purpose of His coming was to destroy the demons.⁸ "To destroy" is an aorist infinitive expressing purpose.

οἶδα --some texts have οἶδαμεν --"I know" meaning more than mere recognition; it refers to a deeper knowledge. The whole clause literally translated is very expressive: "I know you who you are."

⁵Ibid., p. 174.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Taylor, Mark, p. 174; A.E.J. Rawlinson, St. Mark with Introduction, Commentary, and Additional Notes, 6th ed. Westminster Commentaries, eds. Walter Lock and D.C. Simpson (London: Methuen and Co., 1947), p. 16.

⁸Ibid. See also J.M. Robinson, The Problem of History in Mark, Studies in Biblical Theology, No. 21 (Naperville, Illinois: Alec R. Allenson, 1957), p. 37.

ὁ ἅγιος τοῦ Θεοῦ, "the Holy One of God." The majority of scholars take this as a Messianic title, though the phrase is not known in relevant literature as a Messianic title.⁹ It seems that the demoniac uses the title to imply Messiahship.

Verse 25. καὶ, "But," indicates the reaction of Jesus to this sudden intrusion and outburst.

ἐπετίμησεν, literally "to lay a value upon, to raise in price." In the New Testament it means "rebuke, admonish, censure."¹⁰ Arndt and Gingrich say, "speak seriously, warn, in order to prevent an action or bring one to an end."¹¹ It is thus more a command than a reproof or prohibition.

αὐτῷ refers to the spirit, as the content of the command makes clear.

Φιμώθητι, "be silent." Literally, "bridle, muzzle." Moulton and Milligan cite Rohde on the use of this word with the sense of binding a person by means of a spell so as to make him powerless to harm, and they also quote examples from the papyri.¹² The same word is also used in Mark 4:39 addressed to the storm.

Verse 26. σπαράξαν, "convulsing." In classical Greek this

⁹Taylor, Mark, p. 174.

¹⁰Liddell and Scott, I, 666-67.

¹¹Arndt and Gingrich, p. 303.

¹²Moulton and Milligan, p. 672.

word means "tear, rend." Swete suggests "convulse."¹³ The parallel passage Luke 4:35 states ῥίψαν αὐτὸν τὸ δαιμόνιον εἰς τὸ μέσον. Swete suggests that Luke's ῥίψαν may correspond to Mark's σπαράξαν which suggests no laceration.¹⁴ Cranfield says that Luke's wording may underline the completeness of the demon's defeat.¹⁵

φωνῆσαν φωνῇ μεγάλῃ, "crying with a loud voice." Luke has connected this with the demoniac's earlier cry (4:33). It is noted that the unclean spirit is the one who shouted out. Swete says that this is the last time that the unclean spirit spoke through the human voice.¹⁶ The expulsion of the spirit produced a violent paroxysm.

Verse 27. The result and effect of this expulsion was that they were all amazed. Then they reacted and began to question among themselves. There was an exchange of opinions, possibly a conflict of opinions. Why were they amazed? There are two possible answers: (1) because Jesus, contrary to the Jewish exorcists, cast out the unclean spirit with a word, without the use of magical formulae, incantations or spells; (2) because of Jesus' teaching which was contrary

¹³ Henry Barclay Swete, The Gospel According to St. Mark: The Greek Text with Introduction, Notes and Indices (3rd ed.; London: Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1909), p. 21.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ C.E.B. Cranfield, The Gospel According to Saint Mark: An Introduction and Commentary, Cambridge Greek Testament Commentary, ed. C.F.D. Moule (Cambridge: The University Press, 1959), p. 79.

¹⁶ Swete, loc. cit.

to typical, rabbinic teaching. He spoke and taught with authority (cf. v. 22).

Τί ἐστὶν τοῦτο; διδασχὴ καὶ κατ' ἐξουσίαν.
καὶ The clause κατ' ἐξουσίαν may be joined to "new teaching" or to "he commands." The first suggestion is preferred by the Bible Society Text, Moffatt, Berkeley, Weymouth, Gould,¹⁷ and Taylor.¹⁸ The second is preferred by AV, RV, RSV, and Swete.¹⁹ It would appear that the second is to be preferred since verse 22 records the people's astonishment at the authoritative teaching of Jesus. Here, a new element--authority to cast out evil spirits--is introduced, and the phrase κατ' ἐξουσίαν goes well with "he commands."

διδασχὴ καὶ, "new teaching" in the qualitative sense rather than the temporal sense is intended,²⁰ though there may be an element of both here.

καὶ, normally translated "and," has what is called the ascensive force, meaning "even."²¹ The state of possession indicated the fullest extent to which the forces of evil could dominate and control a human personality. Jesus' authority is such, that, the worst that the evil one can do to man, is subjected to Him.

¹⁷Gould, Mark, p. 24.

¹⁸Taylor, Mark, p. 176.

¹⁹Swete, op. cit., pp. 21-22.

²⁰Taylor, Mark, p. 176.

²¹A.T. Robertson, A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research (4th ed.; Nashville: Broadman Press, 1934), p. 1181.

ὑπακούουσιν, "they obey." Arndt and Gingrich suggest that an element of unwillingness is present: "they are forced to obey."²²

The immediate confrontation of demonic powers, the driving out of the demon, the new authority over evil, these all indicate that Jesus' announcement concerning the kingdom of God having arrived, was true. "For Jesus himself and for the early Church, these exorcisms were signs of the in-breaking of the kingdom of God."²³ This is exactly what Jesus says: "if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you" (Matthew 12:28).

The Gerasene Demoniac (Matthew 8:28-34; Mark 5:1-20; Luke 8:26-39)

This incident appears in all three Gospels and is placed in a "miracle" section. While Matthew's miracle section differs in content from the other two, it is noted that Mark's and Luke's are identical. Mark and Luke have previously given a similar section referring to the teaching of Jesus regarding the kingdom of God (Mark 4:1-34; Luke 8:4-18). Matthew also precedes his miracle section (8:1-9:8) by the classic teaching section on the kingdom of God, namely, the Sermon on the Mount (5:1-7:28).

Focusing on Mark in particular (Luke is similar), it is observed that the teaching segment on the kingdom of God is followed by a miracle section demonstrating the power of the kingdom of God in every area

²²Arndt and Gingrich, p. 845.

²³Cranfield, Mark, p. 80.

(4:35-5:43). What Jesus does helps to confirm in the disciples' minds and in the readers' minds what He says. Mark seems to interpret Jesus as saying, "I have given you my teaching on the kingdom. Now, here are my works, carefully selected, to vindicate and prove my words."

It is observed that all the miracles in this section took place in, near, or around the sea of Galilee, and that the disciples were present for all of them (only Peter, James and John at the raising of Jairus' daughter). The miracles demonstrate the mastery of Jesus in the world of nature (4:35-41), the world of spirits (5:1-20), the world of disease and the world of death (5:21-43). Mark shows that Jesus is able to overcome triumphantly any and every affliction that may come upon man. His triumph over death in the raising of Jairus' daughter is the climax. Different classes of people, and possibly even different races are evident among the recipients of divine favor. As the account in Mark is the fullest, Mark will again be followed, and the contributions of Matthew and Luke will be observed.

Verse 1. Regarding the place where this event took place, there are textual variations and the exact identification of the region mentioned is disputed. The majority of manuscripts appear to favor

Γερασηνῶν, "Gerasenes."

Verse 2. Matthew speaks of two demoniacs, while Mark and Luke refer to one. ὑπήντησεν, "he met, he encountered." Sometimes this word is used in a hostile sense (cf. Luke 14:31), and it is possible that this sense is intended here. The man inhabited the tombs where demons were commonly believed to dwell. According to verse 3 the man

lived among the tombs (cf. Luke 8:27). From Luke's account this was a desert place also (8:29), and Mark indicates that there were mountains nearby (verse 5). These were all thought to be familiar dwelling places of demons.

ἄνθρωπος ἐν πνεύματι ἀκαθάρτῳ, "a man with an unclean spirit"; see comment on Mark 1:23. Dr. Koch suggests that the residence of demons within a person is a mark of possession.²⁴

καὶ οὐδε ἀλύσει οὐκέτι οὐδεὶς ἐδύνατο αὐτὸν δῆσαι, literally, "and not even with a chain was anyone any longer able to bind him." The repetition of the negatives indicates his hopeless condition.

Verse 4. This gives the reason for the previous statement. Taylor says, "the construction [δεὰ τό c. infin.] is used to indicate past circumstances which explain the present situation."²⁵ The description of the man shattering the chains and smashing the fetters points to his abnormal strength.

καὶ οὐδεὶς ἴσχυεν αὐτὸν δαμάσαι is a summary statement of the detailed description of the demoniac's superhuman strength. When it is realized that the man had probably a very irregular diet, his strength is all the more remarkable. His unusual strength, in the present writer's opinion, is an indication of demon

²⁴Kurt Koch, Unpublished sermon notes on the Gerasene Demoniac. Used by permission.

²⁵Taylor, Mark, p. 279.

possession. δαμάσαι, "to subdue," is found only here in Mark, and is used also of animals in the sense of "tame, subdue."²⁶ It suggests the wildness of his character.

Verse 5. This verse describes the present state of the demoniac. διὰ παντὸς νυκτὸς καὶ ἡμέρας, "night and day." Taken along with the periphrastic imperfects it suggests that this was a continual, habitual, and frequent activity of cutting, gashing, and bruising himself, occurring at intervals during the day and night. Luke also describes the man as "naked" (8:27), and Mark implies this by stating that, after his deliverance, he was clothed and in his right mind (5:15). This description of the demoniac (vv. 3-5), is intended to show the hopeless condition into which the man had come, and also to magnify the power of Jesus in his deliverance.

Verse 6. The narrative is resumed. The demoniac, seeing Jesus from a distance, ran and fell down in obeisance at His feet. προσεκύνησεν, "worship, do obeisance to, do reverence to," can also have the meaning of asking a favor.²⁷ The man is described as running which suggests his hostile intentions.²⁸ Matthew confirms this hostile attitude when he states that the demoniacs were "so fierce that no one could pass that way" (8:28). "This violent haste was not the fruit of an amiable curiosity, but the proof of malevolent

²⁶Arndt and Gingrich, p. 169.

²⁷Ibid., pp. 723-24.

²⁸Swete, Mark, p. 94.

intention."²⁹ The kneeling obeisance and the falling down before Jesus (Luke 8:28; cf. Mark 3:11), does not eliminate the hostility of the demons. Robinson suggests that these are gestures of recognition to the superior power of Jesus which do not mean the end of the demons' hostility. Instead, it is a subtle and deliberate attempt of the demons

to overcome Jesus' power by naming his name, or even by adjuring by God. Only when these attacks fail do they plead for the mercy which their posture suggests (5:10-12), or perform a last act of defiance which reveals their real attitude (1:26).³⁰

In verses 6-7 there are features which have been noted in the Capernaum case: the reference to the shouting and yelling (v. 7 cf. 1:23,26), the question, "Why dost thou meddle with me?" (v. 7 cf. 1:24), the confession of Jesus as Son of the Most High God (v. 7 cf. 1:24), and the fear of torment (v. 7 cf. 1:24). Matthew softens the title by reducing it to "Son of God," (8:29), but the concept of divinity is still expressed.

There is some indication here of a division within the personality of the man. In verse 6 he came to Jesus for help; in verse 7 he was afraid and begged Jesus not to torment him. There is also the evidence of the man's resistance and opposition to Jesus: "Why dost thou meddle with me?" (v. 7). Koch indicates that the splitting or

²⁹Alexander, Demonic Possession, p. 73.

³⁰J.M. Robinson, The Problem of History in Mark, pp. 37-38.

division within the soul was a sign of possession.³¹ Another very strong evidence of possession is what Koch calls "the clairvoyance of the possessed."³² The man, without any previous knowledge, knew Jesus and recognized that He had authority over him. Thwarted in his attempt to make Jesus powerless by the use of His name, the demoniac makes a frenzied last appeal, "I adjure you by God, do not torment me" (v. 7). The content of the question and this statement suggest that it is the unclean spirit who is speaking. Usually this is very obvious to the hearer or hearers. This ability to speak with a different voice indicates that the man is under the control of an alien power. ὁρκίζω σε τὸν θεόν, "I implore you by God,"³³ expresses the idea of putting a person on oath. The unclean spirit is afraid. This again demonstrates the power of Jesus over the demonic. Matthew omits this statement completely, and Luke tones it down, δέομαί σου, "I beseech you."

μή με βασανίσῃς -- μή with the aorist subjunctive-- literally, "do not start tormenting me." In Mark there is probably the idea of temporal punishment, but Matthew's "Have you come to torment us before the time?" and Luke's reference to the abyss (8:31), would suggest an eschatological punishment.

³¹Koch, Unpublished sermon notes.

³²Ibid.

³³Arndt and Gingrich, p. 585.

Three possible reasons for this fear of torment may be suggested: (1) There is the fear of expulsion from the body of the possessed man (Mark 5:8; Luke 8:29). As demons are frequently pictured as disembodied spirits, there is the craving for a home or dwelling place (Matthew 12:43ff.; Luke 11:24ff.). This perhaps may indicate the demons' desire to enter the swine (Mark 5:12). Nevius refers to a case where a demon claimed the body of a woman as his resting place in which he had been resident about seven years.³⁴

(2) There is the fear of eternal punishment (Matthew 8:29; Luke 8:31).

(3) There is the fear of the presence of Jesus whose holiness and purity accentuated the uncleanness of the demons.³⁵

Verse 8. ἔλεγεν γὰρ αὐτῷ, "For he was saying to him." γὰρ (for) introduces an explanation of the demoniac's frantic statement. The imperfect indicates either (1) that Jesus was in the act of expelling the unclean spirit when He was interrupted; or (2) that Jesus was repeating His command. Some scholars affirm that the imperfect is used in the sense of the pluperfect, "he had been saying,"³⁶

³⁴ John L. Nevius, Demon Possession (8th ed.; Grand Rapids, Michigan: Kregel Publications, 1968), p. 31. This edition is reprinted from the seventh edition. Originally published under the title Demon Possession and Allied Themes.

³⁵ Sunanda Anandakumar, "A Study of the New Testament Accounts of Demon Possession and Exorcism in the light of recent scholarship with special reference to the contemporary situation and pastoral experience in India." (Unpublished Master's thesis, Serampore University, 1964), pp. 49-50.

³⁶ Taylor, Mark, p. 281; Cranfield, Mark, p. 178; Swete, Mark, p. 95.

and this would indicate a preference for the first suggestion. It is thus inferred here that the unclean spirit did not obey Jesus immediately, and it appears that a simple command was not sufficient to dislodge him from his victim. αὐτῷ, "to him"--even though only the man has been mentioned before, this refers to the unclean spirit, as the command is addressed to him. Throughout this incident there is confusion between the man and the demon(s) who possessed him.

ἔξελθε, "come out" is also used in 1:25 and 9:25.

Verse 9. αὐτόν is a masculine pronoun and thus refers to the man. It is very difficult to separate the man from the unclean spirit in this account.

Τί ὄνομά σοι; "What is thy name?" In the ancient world knowledge of the name of the demon was thought to carry with it power over the demon. "It was imperative for the exorcist to know the name of his adversary."³⁷

Λεγιών, "Legion." This is a Latin word which found its way into Hellenistic Greek and Aramaic. A Roman legion was approximately 6000 men. Wellhausen suggests that the demon, giving its number avoids giving its name.³⁸ This seems a strained interpretation. The man may have recalled to mind the sight of a Roman legion and gave the name.

³⁷Samson Eitrem, Some Notes on the Demonology in the New Testament, 2nd. ed., rev. and enlarged. Symbolae Osloenses Fasc. Supplet. XX (Osloae: In Aedibus Universitetsforlaget, 1966), p. 71.

³⁸Julius Wellhausen, Einleitung in die drei ersten Evangelien (2nd ed.; Berlin: Georg Reimer, 1911), p. 39, cited by Vincent Taylor, The Gospel According to St. Mark, p. 281.

The present writer does not think that it is necessary to appropriate Babylonian or rabbinic practices to this particular question of Jesus. For some reason, Jesus wanted to know his name. It is the only case in the Synoptics where Jesus requests the victim's name. Perhaps, because of the man's unusually abnormal and bizarre behavior, Jesus wanted to know some more details about him. Cranfield tentatively asks, "Does the answer express the man's sense of being possessed by a whole host of demons. . . . Or is it an evasive answer . . . ?"³⁹ It would appear that Jesus addressed the man and the unclean spirits replied. Matthew omits the statement entirely.

ὅτι πολλοί ἐσμεν, "because we are many." The masculine πολλοί does not agree with the neuter τὰ πνεύματα τὰ ἀκάθαρτα (v. 13). It seems to depend on λεγιῶν (vv. 9,15) which is masculine. This statement is the explanation given for the name (cf. Luke 8:30).

Verse 10. καὶ παρεκάλει αὐτὸν πολλὰ, "and he begged him eagerly." The subject of παρεκάλει (imperfect) could be "unclean spirits (neuter plural), and this is how Moffatt, Goodspeed, and Taylor⁴⁰ interpret it. On the other hand, the AV, RV, RSV, Weymouth, and Cranfield⁴¹ understand the subject to be the man. In view of the nature of the request, it seems that the unclean spirits would be more likely to speak. Luke very clearly has the plural verb,

³⁹ Cranfield, Mark, p. 178.

⁴⁰ Taylor, Mark, p. 281.

⁴¹ Cranfield, loc. cit.

παρεκάλουν, which avoids all confusion (8:31). Also, Mark resorts to the plural in verse 12, when the unclean spirits request to enter the swine (cf. Luke 8:32). Matthew, too, states that the demons made the request (8:31), though this cannot be of much help since he speaks of two demoniacs. πολλὰ is the accusative used as an adverb meaning "earnestly, strictly, greatly, loudly, often."⁴²

ἵνα μὴ αὐτὰ ἀποστείλῃ, literally, "that he not send them out." This is not a purpose clause, but rather expresses the nature and content of the request.

ἔξω τῆς χώρας, "outside the country." It was commonly believed that demons were associated with particular regions. Luke has εἰς τὴν ἄβυσσον, which means "into the abyss." This word is used of the sea in the Septuagint (Genesis 7:11; Job 41:23); in the New Testament it refers to the abode of the dead (Romans 10:7), and here in Luke 8:31 it is the abode of the demons which is a place of punishment.⁴³ Luke, it seems, suggests that the demons recognized the authority of Jesus and feared imprisonment in the abyss either temporarily or permanently.

Verse 11. χοίρων. The presence of pigs indicates Gentile territory east of Galilee. Matthew (8:30), states that the herd was "far from them" (μακρὰν ἀπ' αὐτῶν). Mark alone (v. 13), notes

⁴²Arndt and Gingrich, p. 695.

⁴³Alfred Plummer, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Luke, The International Critical Commentary (2nd ed.; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1898), p. 231.

that the herd numbered about two thousand, which is thought to approximately correspond to the name, Legion.

Verse 12. καὶ παρεκάλεσαν αὐτὸν λέγοντες, "and they begged him saying." Though the subject is neuter plural, "unclean spirits," the verb is in the plural, and the participle is masculine plural. Swete suggests that the spirits have finally disassociated themselves from the man, as their defeat is imminent; this would account for the plural.⁴⁴ The use of the aorist here (cf. v. 10, where the imperfect is used) suggests that the repeated requests have changed into one particular request.⁴⁵

Πέμπον ἡμᾶς εἰς τοὺς χοίρους, "Send us to the swine." πέμπω is only found in the Markan account which tends to be more vivid than others.

ἵνα εἰς αὐτοὺς εἰσέλθωμεν, literally, "so that we might enter into them." ἵνα would then denote purpose as AV and NASB indicate, but this view is not acceptable to many. Another suggestion is to take ἵνα in the imperative sense: "let us enter into them" as RSV, NEB and Taylor⁴⁶ make clear.

Verse 13. ἐπέτρεψεν αὐτοῖς, "he gave them leave." This shows that the demons were subject to Jesus.

ἐξελθόντα τὰ πνεύματα τὰ ἀκάθαρτα, "the unclean

⁴⁴Swete, Mark, p. 96.

⁴⁵Cranfield, op. cit., p. 179.

⁴⁶Taylor, Mark, p. 282.

spirits came out." This is an important point in the case. The sudden and complete deliverance which this man experienced is a sure mark of his possession. Sudden deliverance does not take place among the mentally ill.

ῥῆμῃσεν, "it rushed (headlong)." ⁴⁷

κατὰ τοῦ κρημνοῦ εἰς τὴν θάλασσαν, "down the steep bank into the sea." κατὰ with the genitive means "down from." ⁴⁸
κρημνός, "steep slope, bank, cliff."

ἐπνίγοντο, "they were drowned, choked." Luke and Matthew agree, though Matthew uses ᾗπεθονον, "they perished" (8:32). There are five details centered around the verbs: (1) Jesus gave the unclean spirits permission. (2) The unclean spirits came out. (3) The unclean spirits entered the swine. (4) The herd rushed headlong into the sea. (5) The swine were drowned in the sea. Many theories and rationalizations have been suggested to account for this phenomenon, but the possibility that Jesus did permit real unclean spirits to enter the swine should not be overlooked. ⁴⁹ If this is the case, then it appears that Jesus did not foresee the destruction of the swine.

Verse 15. After the herdsmen fled and reported the incident in the city, the people came to see what had occurred.

θεωροῦσιν τὸν δαίμονιζόμενον, "they see the demon-

⁴⁷Arndt and Gingrich, p. 585.

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 406.

⁴⁹Cranfield, Mark, pp. 179-80.

possessed man." θεωρέω, "look at, observe, gaze" with the idea of being a spectator. τὸν δαίμονι ἵόμενον identifies the man, but is not intended to suggest that he was still demon-possessed. Mark is more specific later in the verse: τὸν ἐσχέκοτα τὸν λεγιῶνα, "he who had the legion." The perfect participle here is used as a pluperfect,⁵⁰ and implies that he did not have the legion any longer. Cranfield says that this is an aorist perfect which is translated in English by the pluperfect: "who had had." Cf. also the aorist participle ὁ δαίμονισθεὶς (v. 18), which has the force of the pluperfect.⁵¹ Luke is also quite definite, speaking of the man ἀφ' οὗ τὰ δαίμόνια ἐξῆλθεν, "from whom the demons had gone out (v. 35).

καθήμενον ἱματισμένον καὶ σωφρονοῦντα, "sitting there, clothed and in his right mind." These three participles graphically picture the changed condition of the man as observed by those who knew his former state. καθήμενον in the special sense "sit quietly"⁵² is used to describe the position of a disciple. It is customary in the East for disciples to sit on the ground at the feet of the master. Luke 8:35 states specifically that the man was "sitting at the feet of Jesus." Previously the demoniac had been restless; now

⁵⁰ Ernest De Witt Burton, Syntax of the Moods and Tenses in New Testament Greek (3rd ed.; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1955), p. 72.

⁵¹ Cranfield, op. cit., p. 181.

⁵² Arndt and Gingrich, p. 390.

he sits at rest. ἱματισμένον, "dressed, clothed" is in contrast to his former state of nakedness (Luke 8:27). σωφρονοῦντα describes the man's mental state: soundness, sanity of mind. Luke 8:36 describes the man as ἑσώθη which conveys the idea of rescue and deliverance in this context. The RSV rendering "was healed" does not seem appropriate; better "was delivered."

The change in the man was so remarkable that the people were awed, perhaps sensing something of the supernatural in the incident. Their reaction was swift. They begged Jesus to leave their country. The delivered man begged Jesus to permit him to go with Him, but Jesus sent him to his own community. It is noted how frequently παρακαλέω (vv. 10,12,17,18) is used to focus attention on Jesus who is Master of the situation.

The Demoniac Boy (Mark 9:14-29; Matthew 17:14-21; Luke 9:37-43)

This incident occurs in the first three Gospels and is set in the same context in each Gospel. Traina has suggested that there is a contrast between the transfiguration episode and the demoniac boy incident. The power of Christ on the mount is contrasted with the impotence of the disciples on the plain.⁵³ Another important point is that the incident emphasizes the disciples' lack of faith. Certainly this is an emphasis in the Matthean and Lukan accounts, but it is

⁵³ Robert A. Traina, Lectures on the Gospel according to St. Mark, given in Asbury Theological Seminary, Fall Semester, 1970.

possible to understand the emphasis in Mark as a lack of prayer (14:29).^{9:59} As the Markan account is the fullest, attention will be directed to it primarily, and points of importance in the others will be noted.

Mark includes an introductory and transitional section (vv. 14-16), which links this incident with the transfiguration. In answer to Jesus' questions, one man from the crowd replied. He was the afflicted boy's father.

Verse 17. τὸν υἱόν μου . . . ἔχοντα πνεῦμα ἄλ᾽λον, "my son . . . having a dumb spirit." Luke states that he was an only child (9:38). According to Mark 9:25 it was a "deaf and dumb spirit." It would appear that the boy was deaf and dumb because of being possessed by the unclean spirit. Luke simply calls it "a spirit" (9:39). Matthew says, σεληνιαῖς τεταλ κὰὶ κακῶς πάσχει, "he is an epileptic and he suffers terribly" (17:15). In the New Testament, Matthew alone uses σεληνιαῖς (4:24; 17:15), which literally means "be moonstruck," and refers to the real or supposed influence which the phases of the moon has upon the victims of epilepsy.⁵⁴ Alexander cites Aretaeus who says that epilepsy "is supposed to be inflicted on persons who have sinned against the moon. Galen . . . says that the moon governs the periods of epileptic seizures."⁵⁵ It is noted that in Matthew 4:24 a distinction is made

⁵⁴Marvin R. Vincent, Word Studies in the New Testament, I (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1946), p. 101.

⁵⁵Alexander, Demonic Possession, p. 63, citing Aretaeus, Chronic Diseases, Bk. I, iv. and Galen, Critical Days.

between demoniacs and epileptics. However, in Matthew 17 the epileptic boy (v. 15) is said to have had a demon (v. 18).

Verse 18. The boy's symptoms are graphically described.

καταλαβη, "it seizes." Arndt and Gingrich state that this word carries the idea of hostile intent.⁵⁶ ῥήσσει is not from the root ῥήγνυμι, "rend, tear," but from ῥήσσω meaning "to throw down, dash to the ground."⁵⁷ ἀφρίσσω, "he foams" cf. v. 20 "he foams at the mouth." τρίβει τοὺς ὀδόντας, "he grinds his teeth," occurs only here in the New Testament. ῥηπαίνεται, "he becomes rigid, he becomes stiff."⁵⁸

Luke's account declares, "the spirit suddenly cries out and convulses" the boy (ἐξείφνης ἤρξατο καὶ σπασάσσει αὐτόν), with the result that "he foams, and shatters him, and will hardly leave him" (9:39). Hobart claims that the Greek words are medical terms and cites evidence for this.⁵⁹ He also comments, "Aretaeus, a physician of about St. Luke's time, in treating of Epilepsy, admits the possibility of this disease being produced by diabolical agency."⁶⁰

The inability of the nine disciples to cast out the spirit

⁵⁶ Arndt and Gingrich, p. 414.

⁵⁷ Ibid., pp. 742-43.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 550.

⁵⁹ William Kirk Hobart, The Medical Language of St. Luke, Dublin University Press Series (Dublin: Hodges, Figgis and Co., 1882), pp. 17-20.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

brought a rebuke from the Master (Mark 9:19). This rebuke is substantially the same in all three accounts. To Mark's ᾧ γεγενῆσθαι πνεύματος, Matthew and Luke add καὶ δειστροπῆς. In Mark 9:14 the scribes were arguing with the nine disciples and were possibly jubilant over the disciples' failure and impotence. The double rebuke of "faithless and perverse" is suggested by Alexander to be an inclusive lesson for all. "The faithlessness is that of the Apostles in particular; the perversity that of the scribes and their sympathisers in general."⁶¹ Cranfield suggests that their lack of faith resulted from over-confidence. On the strength of past success (cf. Mark 6:13, 30), they had taken it for granted that they had the power and ability to do it again.⁶² Jesus' answer (Mark 9:29) seems to strengthen this view by indicating that prayer is necessary. Alexander declares that the special feature which impressed and perhaps puzzled the disciples was the deafness. If they were to cast out demons in His (Jesus') name, how could the deaf boy hear? "According to current notions, the demon was entrenched in security behind the deafness." Because the disciples treated "the Name" in a magical and mechanical way, they failed. Through this they learned that the power of Jesus could only operate on the basis of true faith and earnest prayer.⁶³

Verse 20. καὶ ἰδὼν αὐτόν, "and when he saw him." Though

⁶¹Alexander, Demonic Possession, p. 192.

⁶²Cranfield, Mark, p. 301.

⁶³Alexander, op. cit., p. 193.

ἰδὼν is masculine and does not agree with πνεῦμα it is usually taken as "a constructio ad sensum--the gender of the noun is overlooked in view of the personal action of the spirit."⁶⁴

συνεσπάραξεν, "he convulsed." Taylor suggests that this is a stronger form of σπαράσσω and means "to convulse completely."⁶⁵ In Luke 9:42 the text reads ἔρρηξεν αὐτὸν . . . καὶ συνεσπάραξεν, "(the demon) dashed him down . . . and convulsed him." Arndt and Gingrich give ἔρρηξεν the same meaning as in Mark 9:18,⁶⁶ though RSV and Taylor translate "tore."⁶⁷ Plummer says that ρήσσω "is used of boxers knocking down, and of wrestlers throwing, an opponent."⁶⁸ This present writer prefers to use the word consistently in this context.

καὶ πρὸς τὸν . . . ἐκυλίετο, "and he (the boy) fell . . . and rolled about." There is a change of subject from the spirit to the boy. ἐκυλίετο is used only here in the New Testament. II Peter 2:22 has καλίσμουν, "wallowing" which is used of the sow in the mire. It would appear that when the spirit saw Jesus, it made a violent attack upon the boy. When the holiness and purity of Jesus, and the authority He exercised, confronted the unclean spirit, there was a

⁶⁴Swete, Mark, p. 198; see also Cranfield, op. cit., p. 302; Taylor, Mark, p. 398.

⁶⁵Taylor, op. cit., p. 399.

⁶⁶Arndt and Gingrich, pp. 742-43.

⁶⁷Taylor, loc. cit.

⁶⁸Plummer, Luke, p. 255.

reaction--a violent paroxysm. This, in the present writer's opinion, is an evidence of possession. The unclean spirit knew that the end of his dominion in the boy was near.

In answer to Jesus' question, the father described his son's condition further (vv. 21-22). The boy was afflicted with these attacks "from childhood."

Verse 22. πολλάκις, "often" (cf. Mark 5:4).

καὶ εἰς πῦρ . . . καὶ εἰς ὕδατα, "both into fire . . . and into water." Alexander thinks that the boy was prone to wander outside and appeared to be restless in his habits.⁶⁹ The boy had suicidal tendencies before he met Jesus. Mark uses ἔβαλεν, "it cast, threw, hurled," which suggests violence, but Matthew (17:15) softens this to πίπτει, "he falls." Swete has suggested that ἔβαλεν indicates that these frequent mishaps were not accidental.⁷⁰ Furthermore, the purpose of these attacks was malicious: ἵνα ἀπολέσῃ αὐτόν, "that it might destroy him."

Verse 25. Mark indicates that Jesus took action because the crowd was constantly increasing, and perhaps because He wanted to avoid publicity (cf. Mark 1:44; 5:43; 7:36). ἐπισυντρέχει ὄχλος, "a crowd came running together." The Berkeley translation says, "a mob was collecting," perhaps implying that trouble was brewing. ἐπετίμησεν: see Mark 1:25. τῷ πνεύματι τῷ ἀκαθάρτῳ: see Mark 1:23. This

⁶⁹Alexander, Demonic Possession, p. 84.

⁷⁰Swete, Mark, p. 199.

is the first time in the account that the demon is called unclean.

τὸ ἄλλalon καὶ κωφὸν πνεῦμα, "dumb and deaf spirit."

ἄλλalon, "dumb, mute," refers to a spirit which robs a person of speech. κωφὸν, literally "blunt, dull," can mean either "dumb" or "deaf."⁷¹ Here it means "deaf."

ἐγὼ ἐπιτάσσω σοι, "I command you." ἐγὼ here is used in an emphatic sense.⁷² Even though the unclean spirit had resisted the disciples, Jesus emphasises that it must obey His word.

μηκέτι εἰσέλθης, "never enter (him) again." Bruce notes that in a case of intermittent possession the spirit always returned.⁷³ Jesus' command indicates a permanent deliverance.

Verse 26. κράξας καὶ πολλὰ σπαράξας, "crying out and convulsing (him) much." πολλὰ, the accusative used as an adverb, means "terribly" (RSV), "violently."⁷⁴ Moule says that the accusative is also used to indicate "number or frequency."⁷⁵ Weymouth translates "fit after fit." κράξας and σπαράξας indicate a fresh violent paroxysm, as the unclean spirit finally left its victim.

ὥσεὶ νεκρός, literally means "like a dead (boy)" which has

⁷¹Arndt and Gingrich, p. 463.

⁷²Rawlinson, Mark, p. 124.

⁷³Alexander Balmain Bruce, The Synoptic Gospels, Vol. I, The Expositor's Greek Testament, ed. W. Robertson Nicoll (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1951), p. 403.

⁷⁴Arndt and Gingrich, p. 695.

⁷⁵C.F.D. Moule, An Idiom Book of New Testament Greek (Cambridge: The University Press, 1953), p. 35.

come to mean "like a corpse." Following the convulsions, the boy collapsed and lay in a state of exhaustion, motionless. The people thought he was dead. Both Matthew and Luke omit all these details of the expulsion.

Verse 27. κρατήσας τῆς χειρὸς αὐτοῦ, "(Jesus) took his hand." It is noted that only after the expulsion of the demon, did Jesus place His hands upon him. Jesus laid hands on the sick, but there is no record of His laying hands on the demon possessed. The language of verse 27 is reminiscent of Mark 5:41 where Jesus raised Jairus' daughter.

Verses 28-29. Mark indicates that the failure of the disciples was their lack of prayer, which was the result of their own self-confidence. Most manuscripts have "prayer and fasting," but Westcott and Hort as well as Nestle omit καὶ νηστεία. Luke omits this "post-mortem" discussion completely. Matthew sees the reason for failure as lack of faith (17:20ff.).

The Syrophoenician Girl (Matthew 15:21-28; Mark 7:24-30)

In the case of the Syrophoenician girl, recorded in Matthew and Mark, there are a few points not in the above-mentioned cases. Mark clearly indicates that Jesus went to the region of Tyre and Sidon, Gentile territory (7:24). The woman who came to Jesus is carefully described (v. 26): Ἑλληνίς Συροφονίκισσα, "a Greek in religion, a Syrian in tongue, a Phenician in race."⁷⁶ Mark thus

⁷⁶Bruce, op. cit., p. 390.

emphasises her religion and her nationality. The apparent reluctance of Jesus, and perhaps the significance of the record, is to draw out the woman's humility and faith. Jesus' answer, "O woman, great is thy faith" (Matthew 15:28), brings this out. Because of the simplicity of the woman's faith, Jesus granted her request to cast the demon out of her daughter. This would introduce a new, distinctive element in demon expulsion: faith--required not of the possessed person, but of a friend or relative. Though there is no other case of expulsion to confirm this, there are incidents in Christ's healing ministry in which He required faith of friends (cf. Mark 2:1-12).

It is observed also that the expulsion took place at a distance. The healing of the centurion's servant also took place at a distance (Matthew 8:5-13; Luke 7:1-10). The woman returned and found the child "lying in bed"--βεβλημένον ἐπὶ τὴν κλίνην. βεβλημένον, either means "lying" at rest, indicating normal health as RSV translates, or "thrown," suggesting a violent convulsion, similar to other cases (cf. Mark 9:26),⁷⁷ leaving the person exhausted following the departure of the demon.

Other References

Matthew 9:32-34 refers to a dumb demoniac; Luke 11:14-15 also refers to a dumb demoniac, and appends Jesus' debate with the Pharisees regarding His association with Beelzebul (vv. 16-18). Matthew, however,

⁷⁷Gould, Mark, p. 137.

prefaces this debate between Jesus and the Pharisees with the case of a blind and dumb demoniac (12:22ff.). Mark, who also records the debate (3:20-30), does not include any case of possession at all. In all four places, the accusation "He casts out demons by the prince of demons, Beelzebul" is made (Matthew 9:34; 12:24; Mark 3:22; Luke 11:15). This accusation and the debate which followed will be discussed shortly.

In each of the accounts of possession it is stated that when Jesus had cast out the demon, the dumb man spoke (Matthew 9:33; 12:22; Luke 11:14), implying that there was a relationship between the man's physical condition and the demon possessing him. The expulsion of the demon resulted in the restoration of the man's speech. However, there are other records of the healing of similar ailments, and no reference is made to demons at all. In Mark 7:31-37 there is the case of the deaf mute whom Jesus healed; also, the dumb were brought to Jesus for healing (Matthew 15:30); and, in Matthew 9:27-31, Mark 8:22-26, and 10:46-52 there are instances of the blind receiving their sight; yet there is no suggestion that their diseases were the result of demon possession.

Matthew states clearly that demon possession and disease are to be distinguished: "and they brought him all the sick, those afflicted with various diseases (νόσοις) and pains (βασάνοις), demoniacs (δαίμονι ἰσχυμένους), epileptics (σεληνια ἰσχυμένους), and paralytics (παραλυτικούς), and he healed them" (Matthew 4:24). Also, there are other summary statements in the Synoptics, but of a more general nature, as in Mark 1:32,34

they brought to him all who were sick or possessed with demons. . . . And he healed many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and he would not permit the demons to speak because they knew him.

In the parallel passage in Matthew, the text reads, "and he cast out the spirits with a word" (8:16), which significantly and specifically points to Jesus' method. Other similar references are Luke 6:17-18; 7:21. Jesus Himself, when instructing the twelve disciples, makes the distinction in the command He gives: "Heal the sick . . . cast out demons" (Matthew 10:8). Again, in addressing the Pharisees and telling them to take a message to Herod, Jesus says, "Behold I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow" (Luke 13:32).

Another point, not without significance, is the manner of the cure or expulsion. The term used in Matthew 8:16 is "cast out" (ἐξέβαλεν), and when allusion is made to the victims of demon possession, the words for "healing" are used, as in Matthew 12:22 (ἐθεράπευσεν), Matthew 15:28 (ἰάθη), and Luke 6:18 (ἐθεράπευοντο). The New Testament does not speak of "casting out" a sickness or a disease. When the circumstances of the Biblical records of healing are observed, it is noted that the healing of diseases was effected quietly and without violence. However, in the casting out of demons a violent reaction or paroxysm usually accompanied the deliverance (Mark 9:26; Luke 4:35).⁷⁸

⁷⁸M.J. O'Donnell, "Possession," The Catholic Encyclopedia (1913), XII, 316.

Franz Delitzsch sees a distinction in Scripture between "natural and demoniacal sickness."⁷⁹ "Demoniacal sicknesses consist partly in physical, partly in physico-psychical constraint."⁸⁰ He understands the cases of the dumb man (Matthew 9:32) and the blind and dumb man (Matthew 12:22-24) as bodily sicknesses of a special kind. There is the suggestion of "the magical binding of the organs that in themselves are healthy."⁸¹ Trench, referring to the same cases, suggests, "it was not the outward hindrance, not the still fastened string of the tongue; it was not the outward organ, but the inward power of using the organ, which was at fault."⁸² Kent, taking a similar view, suggests that the dumbness was not due to defective organs, but rather that their normal activity was hindered by the possessing demon.⁸³ Moss, however, feels that the same disease was sometimes ascribed to normal causes, and at other times to possession, "the distinguishing feature being possibly intractability due to the violence of permanence of the symptoms."⁸⁴

⁷⁹ Franz Delitzsch, A System of Biblical Psychology, trans. from German by Robert Ernest Wallis (2nd ed.; Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1966. Reprinted from 1899 edition), p. 346.

⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 347.

⁸¹ Ibid., p. 348.

⁸² Richard C. Trench, Notes on the Miracles of Our Lord (2nd American ed.; New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1856), p. 128.

⁸³ W.H. Kent, "Demoniacs," The Catholic Encyclopedia (1913), IV, 711.

⁸⁴ R.W. Moss, "Possession," Dictionary of the Bible, ed. James Hastings (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1909), p. 739.

Delitzsch seems to indicate that there is development in demoniacal sickness. He does not see "perfect possession" in the physical alone, but feels that it should be manifest "in expressed psychical phenomena."⁸⁵ These phenomena he sees clearly illustrated in the Gerasene demoniac, where the desire to be among the tombs and in solitary places, along with the fact that it appears obvious that it was not the man himself who addressed Jesus, suggest a demoniacal motivation.⁸⁶ Foerster, in the present writer's opinion, sees the issue when he says that sickness is not the crucial point in most cases of possession, "but a destruction and distortion of the divine likeness of man according to creation." The centre of the personality, the real person, is damaged by alien forces which attempt to destroy him. Jesus' ministry to the demon-possessed especially sets Him forth as the inaugurator of the divine rule among men.⁸⁷ He concludes on a very positive note:

The crucial thing is that demons are expelled by a word of command issued by the power of God and not by the invocation of a superior but essentially similar spirit, nor by the use of material media.⁸⁸

⁸⁵Delitzsch, op. cit., p. 349.

⁸⁶Ibid., p. 350.

⁸⁷Werner Foerster, "δαίμων, δαιμόνιον," Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, ed. Gerhard Kittel. Trans. and ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, II (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1966), 19.

⁸⁸Ibid.

THE TEACHING OF JESUS

The Beelzebul Controversy (Matthew 12:22-30; Mark 3:22-27; Luke 11:14-23)

As has already been noted, Matthew and Luke preface this controversy with the Pharisees by citing the case of the blind and dumb demoniac and the dumb demoniac respectively. Mark does not record a case at this point. Matthew alone observes not only the people's amazement, but also their words, "Can this be the Son of David?" (12:23). Matthew uses the imperfect (ἔλεγον) which suggests that the question was being circulated.⁸⁹ μήτι expects the answer 'No,' but there is latent in the question the idea that the people are not sure. οὗτός is emphatic. The people's query brought a sharp response from the Pharisees, "It is only by Beelzebul, the prince of demons, that this man casts out demons" (Matthew 12:24). Mark adds another statement: "He is possessed by Beelzebul" (3:22). Οὗτός (Matthew 12:24), being placed first, is emphatic and corresponds to οὗτός (v. 23).⁹⁰

βεελζεβούλ (cf. Matthew 10:25; 12:27; Mark 3:22; Luke 11:15,18) presents difficulties both in its spelling and derivation. βεελζεβούλ is found in all the Greek manuscripts, but the form βεελζεβούβ is only in the Vulgate. Beelzebub is thought to be

⁸⁹ R.C.H. Lenski, The Interpretation of St. Matthew's Gospel (Columbus, Ohio: The Wartburg Press, 1960), p. 475.

⁹⁰ Alan Hugh McNeile, The Gospel According to St. Matthew (London: Macmillan and Co., 1915), p. 174.

connected with the "Baal-zebub god of Ekron" of whom Ahaziah inquired concerning his disease (II Kings 1:2f.). The name literally means "Lord of flies" and it was thought to refer to a god who could send or take away a plague of flies.⁹¹

The main interpretations of βεελζεβούλ are:

- (1) that it comes from the Hebrew zebel which means "dung." The compound would then mean "Lord of dung," which is said to be "an opprobrious designation of the Evil One."⁹²
- (2) that it derives from the Hebrew zebul meaning "dwelling, abode." "Beelzebul" would mean "Lord of the abode (shrine)" eventually being used as a title of Satan. As "Lord of the dwelling" it may refer to the air or to the possessed in whom he dwells.⁹³
- (3) as the Old Testament, rabbinic literature, and the Dead Sea Scrolls used the term ליל to distinguish one of the seven heavens, so it is suggested that the name Beelzebul may stand for the Evil One, as lord of a particular region (cf. Ephesians 2:2).⁹⁴

In the Talmud, Beelzebul is regarded as a prince among demons, and is thought of as the most evil of all evil spirits.⁹⁵ In the

⁹¹Edward Langton, Essentials of Demonology (London: Epworth Press, 1949), pp. 166-67.

⁹²T.H. Gaster, "Beelzebul," The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, I, 374.

⁹³Taylor, Mark, p. 239.

⁹⁴Gaster, loc. cit.

⁹⁵W.O.E. Oesterley, "Demon, Demoniacal Possession, Demoniacs," A Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels, ed. James Hastings, I (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1921), 439a footnote.

Synoptic accounts, Jesus' reply indicates that He assumes the reference to be to Satan, and the Jews appear to have adopted the word as a vulgar term for Satan. The Pharisees wanted to counteract the people's questioning, and made a blasphemous and derogatory statement about the life and ministry of Jesus. To say βεελζεβούλ ἔχει, "He hath Beelzebul" (Mark 3:22) means that Jesus is possessed by an evil spirit, and the remainder of verse 22 (cf. Matthew 12:24; Luke 11:15) indicates that Jesus' works of expulsion are performed by the power of the prince of the demons, that is, Satan.

Jesus' answer begins in Matthew 12:25ff. with the two analogies of the kingdom and of the city or house. If they are divided within themselves, they cannot stand. Then (v. 26) Jesus takes the assertion of the Pharisees, "If Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself," and in a masterly conclusion (οὐκ) using the form of a question, He asks, "How then, will his kingdom stand?" Thus He demonstrates the absurdity of their claim. By stating His conclusion in the form of a question, Jesus forces the Pharisees to answer a question which they cannot. It is a devastating blow to the Pharisees; they are speechless. If one member can cast out another, then the kingdom of Satan must have an end (cf. Mark 3:26). But its continuance proves the premise of the Pharisees to be grossly wrong. Their reasoning is logically untenable. In verse 27 Jesus proceeds further: "And if I cast out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your sons cast them out?" There is a contrast between "I" and "your sons." It is observed that Jesus takes for granted the existence of Jewish exorcists. "Your sons"

is here taken to mean "your fellow Jews." McNeile has pointed out that Jesus did not deny the reality of Jewish exorcisms nor express Himself as to the power employed. "He argues from His opponents' ground."⁹⁶ He shows that the Pharisees' accusation is disproved because they raise it only against Him, and not also against their own exorcists. If Jesus' success is due to His alliance with Beelzebul, then the same rule must apply to any success of the Jewish exorcists. διὰ τοῦτο, "Because of this," that is, the fallacy of their reasoning and the implied self-contradiction, their fellow Jews shall be their judges. Lenski takes this to mean at God's judgment bar, and views the Jewish exorcists as pronouncing sentences on these blaspheming Pharisees.⁹⁷

When Jesus says to the Pharisees, "And if I cast out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your sons cast them out?" He is asserting that His power and authority are different from, and in contrast to, the Jewish exorcists. Verse 28 indicates that it is by the Spirit of God that Jesus casts out demons. Unger points out the vivid contrast between the methods of the Jewish exorcists which were elaborate, superstitious, ritualistic, and full of magical incantations, and those of Jesus which were authentic, simple, unostentatious, and tremendously effective.⁹⁸

⁹⁶McNeile, Matthew, p. 176.

⁹⁷Lenski, Interpretation of Matthew, p. 478.

⁹⁸Merrill F. Unger, Biblical Demonology: A Study of the Spiritual Forces behind the Present World Unrest (7th ed.; Wheaton, Illinois: Scripture Press, 1967), p. 105.

Jesus has shown that collusion with Beelzebul was illogical and absurd. The only other alternative, which the Pharisees refused to face, was that the power in Jesus was divine power. Jesus now introduces this element: "But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you" (Matthew 12:28).

Where Matthew has ἐν πνεύματι θεοῦ, Luke in the parallel passage (11:20) has ἐν δακτύλῳ θεοῦ, "by the finger of God" (cf. Exodus 8:19). McNeile thinks that δακτύλῳ in Luke is genuine, as it is not likely that he would avoid πνεῦμα which occurs frequently in his writings. He suggests that Matthew uses πνεῦμα to prepare for verses 31f.⁹⁹ Kümmel thinks that they both come to mean the same thing.¹⁰⁰ It seems that every demon expulsion wrought by Jesus through the energy of the Holy Spirit proves that "the kingdom of God has come." ἐφθασεν has raised quite a controversy among Biblical scholars. ἐφθασεν means "has come," but "the point at issue is whether . . . the exorcisms are a sign of the actual presence of the Kingdom or only of its imminence."¹⁰¹ Perrin also indicates that the expulsions are the signs of victory in the warfare against Satanic

⁹⁹ McNeile, loc. cit.

¹⁰⁰ Otto Kaiser and Werner Georg Kümmel, Exegetical Method: A Student's Handbook, trans. E.V.N. Goetchius (New York: The Seabury Press, 1967), p. 64.

¹⁰¹ Norman Perrin, The Kingdom of God in the Teaching of Jesus, The New Testament Library (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1963), p. 87.

powers.¹⁰² The tense of ἐφθασεν (aorist) also seems to indicate that the event had happened, though this is not in itself conclusive. "The demon expulsions show that the kingdom is not merely on the way but 'did already reach to you.'"¹⁰³

Jesus illustrates His argument (Matthew 12:29; Mark 3:27; Luke 11:21-22), and implies that the expulsions prove that He, by the power of God, has bound Satan. Luke's account is a little more detailed than the others, yet there is a close resemblance among all of them. Isaiah 49:24ff. is generally thought to have influenced this saying.¹⁰⁴ The point is that before the goods of the strong man can be plundered, it is necessary first to bind him.

Verse 29. ὁ ἰσχυρός, "the strong man," is used as a name for Satan. For Matthew's οἰκίαν, Luke has αὐλήν, literally "courtyard," but it can also mean the "court of a prince,"¹⁰⁵ and then becomes "palace" (cf. RSV). This compares well with ἄρχων, "prince" (Luke 11:15; Matthew 12:24) and βασιλεία, "kingdom" (Luke 11:18; Matthew 12:26). Luke also adds the details about the strong man being armed and guarding his goods (11:21). Where Matthew has τὰ σκεύη αὐτοῦ, Luke has τὰ ὑπάρχοντα αὐτοῦ. "His 'goods' are his

¹⁰²Ibid., p. 171.

¹⁰³Lenski, op. cit., p. 480.

¹⁰⁴Ibid. See also Taylor, Mark, p. 241; Plummer, Luke, p. 303.

¹⁰⁵Arndt and Gingrich, pp. 120-21.

'possessions,' such as the demoniacs whom Satan has in his power.¹⁰⁶

δέσση, "he should bind." Taylor points out that the concept of the binding of evil powers is eschatological and is illustrated in the apocalyptic literature.¹⁰⁷ Luke differs here. He speaks of ἰσχυρότερος αὐτοῦ, "one stronger than he" who is Christ Himself. ἔπελθὼν νικήσῃ αὐτόν, literally "comes and overcomes him." νικήσῃ corresponds to δέσση, and expresses the complete victory that Jesus commands over evil powers. "All that Jesus says here would be senseless . . . if demoniacal possession . . . was an ordinary mental ailment."¹⁰⁸

The Return of the Unclean Spirit (Matthew 12:43-45; Luke 11:24-26)

Matthew indicates that Jesus is using this illustration to portray the condition of "this evil generation" (12:45). Luke, however, places it along with the Beelzebul controversy, suggesting that it relates to the same debate. In the Matthean account, there is the firm suggestion that the kingdom of Satan is retreating, but, at the same time, Jesus warns the Jews of their perilous spiritual condition. Their calumny against Jesus, and Jesus' warning against their blasphemy and committing the unpardonable sin, point to their state as evil and wicked. Their rejection of Jesus will result in a worsening of that condition.

¹⁰⁶ Lenski, op. cit., p. 481.

¹⁰⁷ Taylor, loc. cit.

¹⁰⁸ Lenski, loc. cit.

Verse 43. Jesus uses the case of a demoniac who was delivered from demon possession in some way. The unclean spirit is described as wandering through "waterless places" (δι' ἀνύδρων τόπων). As has already been noted, demons were thought to inhabit the desert and ruined places.¹⁰⁹ Eitrem says, "Demons released from their confinement are doubly dangerous."¹¹⁰

Ἰητοῦν ἀνάπαυσιν, literally "seeking a resting-place," describes the intent of the unclean spirit. This restless, unsettled attitude of the spirit is also a characteristic of the possessed in whom he dwells (cf. Mark 5:5; 9:22).

Verse 44. Jesus pictures the unclean spirit, unable to find a resting-place, returning to his former abode. οἶκόν, "house" is the man's personality. The "house is unoccupied; there is a vacancy. σχολεύοντα σεσάρωμένον καὶ κεκοσμημένον, "empty, swept, and put in order." σχολεύοντα, "standing empty" describes the present condition. σεσάρωμένον καὶ κεκοσμημένον are both perfect participles indicating that the house has been swept and put in order, and is still in that condition when the demon comes. The house is ready for a new tenant. If ἐξέλθῃ is understood as an expulsion, then the possibility of a person being again under the control of demons is here indicated. Some scholars, however, state that

¹⁰⁹ See pp. 18, 36.

¹¹⁰ Eitrem, Demonology in the New Testament, p. 16.

the unclean spirit left the person voluntarily.¹¹¹ To the present writer, there is sufficient evidence elsewhere in the Synoptics¹¹² to indicate that ἐξέληθῇ refers to an expulsion.

Verse 45. ἑπτὰ ἕτερα πνεύματα, "seven other spirits." McNeile suggests that as purity and order are abhorrent to the unclean spirit, the spirit proceeds to destroy them.¹¹³ It is usually inferred that there is a connexion between the Synoptic teaching and Babylonian beliefs regarding the "seven spirits."¹¹⁴ It is also stated in Luke 8:2 and Mark 16:9 that Jesus had cast seven demons out of Mary Magdalene. But in the text (Matthew 12:45) there are not seven but eight including the original unclean spirit. It seems that there is no particular significance to be attached to the figure, as "it probably stands merely for a large number, and is not to be understood literally."¹¹⁵ There may be a suggestion that the demons move about in groups, a belief commonly held at the time. The obvious conclusion is, "the last state of the man becomes worse than the first" (Luke 11:26).

The Commission to the Disciples

Not only did Jesus indicate His belief in demon possession by

¹¹¹E.g., McNeile, Matthew, p. 183; Plummer, Luke, p. 304.

¹¹²Arndt and Gingrich, ἐξέρχομαι, 1 (δ), p. 274.

¹¹³McNeile, loc. cit.

¹¹⁴R.C. Thompson, "Demons and Spirits (Assyr.-Bab.)," ERE, IV, 570.

¹¹⁵Langton, Essentials of Demonology, p. 150.

expulsion and verbal teaching, He also commissioned His disciples to do the same work. Matthew 10:1 states, "And he . . . gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every disease and infirmity" (cf. Mark 3:15; 6:7; Luke 9:1). Matthew 10:8 also gives the specific command, "cast out demons." Mark 7:13 reports that they cast out many demons, as well as ministering to the sick. In Luke 10 the Lord sent out the seventy, two by two, and upon their return, they exclaimed, "'Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name!'" (Luke 10:17). This statement introduces a new dimension in the ministry to those who are demon possessed.

ἐν τῷ ὀνόματί σου, "in your name" (cf. Matthew 7:22; Mark 16:17). In the casting out of demons it seems that the disciples relied on the power of the Name of Jesus. Reference has been made to the use of the name of a god in Babylonian demonology.¹¹⁶ It is not intended to suggest that the disciples associated a magical power latent in the name "Jesus." In Old Testament times, when a person invoked the name of another (usually superior) person, he was claiming the authority of that person. The Hebrews viewed the name as an extension of the personality; the name was equivalent to the person behind the name. "The name of Jesus" was not a magical formula or "mantra" to be used over the demon-possessed. Rather, when a disciple invoked the name of Jesus, he was claiming His authority and power invested in the name, to

¹¹⁶See p. 23.

defeat the powers of evil (cf. Luke 10:19). It appears that these seventy disciples, in making use of His name, believed that they were availing themselves of His power and authority. There is no suggestion of amulets or charms being used, though this was a common practice among the Jews. Eitrem says, "It is, indeed, very difficult to detect any truly magical method in the cures of Jesus."¹¹⁷

Jesus' reply to the disciples is pregnant with meaning (v. 18). Here, Satan is represented as the head of the powers of evil.¹¹⁸

Ἐθεώρουν, "I was beholding." The imperfect tense suggests that at the very time they were ministering and overcoming the demonic forces, Jesus was aware that Satan was being overcome. For Jesus, the expulsion of demons was defeat for Satan. "In the defeat of the demons He saw the downfall of their chief."¹¹⁹

Verses 19-20. The secret of the disciples' success was the "authority" (ἐξουσία) given to them by Jesus, an authority greater than the "power" (δύναμις) of the enemy. But Jesus directs their thoughts to the reason for even greater joy--"rejoice that your names are written in heaven" (v. 20).

¹¹⁷Eitrem, Demonology in the New Testament, p. 40. Italics his.

¹¹⁸John Martin Creed, The Gospel According to St. Luke (London: Macmillan and Co., 1953), p. 147.

¹¹⁹Plummer, Luke, p. 278.

THE SYNOPTIC TEACHING AND CONTEMPORARY BELIEFS

When the Gospel records are compared with the contemporary writings, especially in the accounts of demon possession, there is a marked restraint in the language used. In view of the prevailing ideas of Jesus' day, the narratives in the Synoptic Gospels showing the power and authority of Jesus over demons, are very sober by comparison. The sobriety of language, the simplicity of method, and the certainty of deliverance are features which stand out prominently in the Gospel records.

On Demons

The Synoptic Gospels assume the existence and origin of demons. This contrasts greatly with the rabbinic literature¹²⁰ and Jewish apocalyptic writings¹²¹ which probe into the origin of demons. The Synoptics use various terms to describe demons. δαίμόνιον is most frequently used; πνεῦμα ἁκάθαρτον, πνεῦμα πονηρὸν and πνεῦμα also refer to demons. Mark 9:17,25 have πνεῦμα ἄλλαν and ἄλλαν καὶ κωφὸν πνεῦμα respectively. Luke 4:33 has πνεῦμα δαίμονίου ἁκαθάρτου. While the terms are used interchangeably in the Synoptics, πνεῦμα ἁκαθάρτου is noted as a common expression in rabbinic literature, but the forms of spirits as animal, human, or monstrous are in great contrast to the concept of Jesus.

¹²⁰See p. 33.

¹²¹See p. 40.

There are inferences in the Synoptic Gospels to classes or groups of demons. Scripture speaks of "the prince of demons" (Matthew 12:24) and of "his [Satan's] kingdom" (v. 26). The name "Legion" (Mark 5:9) may refer to a host of demons as a class. Matthew 12:45 mentions "seven other spirits" which suggests that demons may possibly move about in groups. The rabbinic literature, however, is much more detailed in classifying demons.¹²² Jesus did not entertain sexual distinctions as existing among spiritual beings (Mark 12:25; Luke 20:36). This was contrary to rabbinic teaching which taught that Lilith was queen of the female demons.¹²³

The Babylonian and Assyrian literature refer to demons as inhabiting deserts, mountains, and solitary places.¹²⁴ In the rabbinic literature, cemeteries, ruins, and desert places are favorite haunts.¹²⁵ Even though in the Synoptic Gospels similar places of habitation are suggested (Mark 5:3,5; Luke 8:29; Matthew 12:43), yet, contrary to the popular view that demons resorted to the desert, Jesus Himself often retired to desert places and fasted in the wilderness. Alexander points out that Jesus went out of His way to express His own attitude toward popular demonology:

He commanded His disciples to gather up the fragments; thus discouraging the idea that demons lurk in crumbs. He had no faith in the ceremonial washing of hands; so repelling the notion that spirits may rest on unwashed hands. He asked a

¹²²See pp. 34-35.

¹²³See p. 33.

¹²⁴See p. 18.

¹²⁵See pp. 35-36.

draught of water from the woman of Samaria . . . ; proving that He had no fear of drinking borrowed water and no belief in local shedim.¹²⁶

The Synoptic Gospels indicate that the final abode of demons is the abyss (Luke 8:31).

On Demon Possession

Demon possession manifests itself in various ways. It creates a restless spirit (Mark 5:5; Matthew 17:15); sometimes the sufferers perform feats indicating abnormal strength (Mark 5:3,4); sometimes the person loses all self-respect (Luke 8:27), and may also manifest suicidal tendencies (Mark 9:22). The unfortunate person may shout, yell, and rave (Mark 1:24,26; 5:5,7; Luke 9:39); he may have convulsive seizures (Mark 1:26; Luke 9:39), foam at the mouth, grind his teeth, and lose his self-control (Mark 9:18,20,26). Unclean spirits can commandeer the human personality and speak through the vocal chords in a voice distinctly not the person's (Mark 1:24; 5:7,9,10,12; cf. Luke 8:31). The possibility of repossession also seems to be indicated (Matthew 12:44).

Scripture shows that the demons could recognize Jesus as "the Holy One of God" (Mark 1:24,34; 5:7; Luke 4:41). The demons showed a hostile attitude to Christ (Mark 5:6) and expressed great fear in His presence (Luke 4:34; Mark 5:7). When those possessed with demons came in contact with Christ, invariably the first effect of the contact was

¹²⁶Alexander, Demonic Possession, p. 45.

a fresh paroxysm (Mark 1:23,24,26; 9:20). The sinless Son of God, exhibiting the white light of holiness and purity against the malignant, vicious powers of darkness and evil, produced a reaction. Christ's holiness was unbearable to the unclean spirits. Mark 1:24 may be interpreted to understand the purpose of Jesus' coming as that of destroying the demons and their rule in the lives of men. The present writer perceives the kingdom of God as the advent of His rule in the lives of men who were formerly under the dominion of evil.¹²⁷

Jesus' manner of casting out demons produced astonishment. It was "by authority" (Mark 1:27), "with a word" (Matthew 8:16), "by the finger of God" (Luke 11:20), and "by the Spirit of God" (Matthew 12:28). The sudden and complete deliverance was a marked feature of His expulsions (Mark 1:26; 5:13; 9:26). The Jewish exorcists performed many rituals, employed herbs, fumigations, and forms of conjuration, and recited magical incantations and formulae, always hoping for success.¹²⁸ Langton observes, "The most striking feature of the exorcisms performed by Jesus was the fact that they were without any accompaniment of the ritual of incantation."¹²⁹ Jesus spoke with authority--an authority which the demons recognized--and without any kind of abracadabra exercised His dominion over the demonic powers. He neither used, nor permitted His disciples to use, any kind of magical formulae or

¹²⁷ See pp. 47-48.

¹²⁸ See pp. 36-40; 43-46.

¹²⁹ Langton, Essentials of Demonology, p. 156.

incantation. Edersheim, after furnishing the details of Jewish exorcism, concludes, "Greater contrast could scarcely be conceived than between what we read in the New Testament and the views and practices mentioned in the Rabbinic writings. . . ." ¹³⁰ Jesus also required faith from the Syrophoenician woman before He fulfilled her request to expel the demon out of her daughter. This expulsion took place at a distance. These are new elements which have no counterpart in rabbinic literature.

Some writers are convinced that the case of the Gerasene demoniac illustrates the practices of contemporary exorcists. Mark 5:9 says, "Jesus asked him, 'What is your name?'" Fallaize states that in order to exorcise the possessing spirit, "it should be compelled to declare through the mouth of the victim either its name . . . or its desires . . . knowledge of which make it possible for it to be expelled by propitiation." ¹³¹ It was deemed necessary for the exorcist to have knowledge of the spirit's name so that he might control it. Deissmann also cites an adjuration, "ὁρκίζω σε πᾶν πνεῦμα δαιμόνιον, λαλήσαι ὅποῖον καὶ ἂν ᾖς," ¹³² which translated, is, "I adjure thee, every demonic spirit, say whatever thou art." ¹³³ Was Jesus

¹³⁰ Alfred Edersheim, The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, II (8th ed. rev.; New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1899), 776.

¹³¹ E.N. Fallaize, "Possession (Introductory and Primitive)," ERE (1919), X, 125. Italics thesis writer.

¹³² Adolf Deissmann, Light from the Ancient East, trans. Lionel R.M. Strachan (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1910), p. 252.

¹³³ Ibid., p. 257.

adopting contemporary practice? It is observed that Jesus never used the language of adjuration in His ministry. As this was such a violent case, He may have desired more information from the man, not only for Himself, but also for the benefit of His disciples.

The request of the demons to enter the swine has provoked discussion. Some feel that this demonstrates the contemporary belief in "the possibility of the transference of demons from a person to some other object. . . ." ¹³⁴ Reference has been made to Josephus' account of a Jewish exorcism. The exorcist placed a basin of water a short distance from the demoniac, and commanded the demon, as he departed, to overturn the basin. This was to indicate, for the spectators' benefit, that the demon had truly departed. ¹³⁵ The suggestion that Jesus did this to assure the man of his release from demonic power is not convincing. According to the description of the man's possession, the resulting calm and controlled behavior was significant evidence of the change. The man surely had a witness within himself that the dominating evil power had gone. Jesus did not command the demons to enter the swine. He acceded to their request. In Babylonian and Jewish demonology it was the exorcist who arranged for the substitute to be on hand in a case of exorcism.

The rabbinic literature ascribes various diseases to the work of demons. ¹³⁶ While there are references to a dumb and deaf spirit

¹³⁴ Langton, Essentials of Demonology, p. 158.

¹³⁵ Josephus, Antiquities, VIII: ii; 5.

¹³⁶ See p. 36.

(Mark 9:25), a dumb demoniac (Matthew 9:32-33), a blind and dumb demoniac (Matthew 12:22), and an epileptic who had a demon (Matthew 17:15,18), the Synoptic Gospels make a distinction between demon possession and disease (Matthew 4:24; Mark 1:32,34). The command of Jesus to His disciples distinguishes disease and demon possession: "Heal the sick . . . cast out demons" (Matthew 10:8). Jesus also makes a distinction when addressing the Pharisees (Luke 13:32). Jesus' treatment of the sick and the possessed was very different. "He cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were sick" (Matthew 8:16). He often required faith of the sick before He healed them (Matthew 9:22,29; Mark 5:34; 10:52; Luke 17:19), but He never required faith of those who were possessed by demons. A violent reaction in the possessed was often manifest in the expulsion of demons; but, in contrast, the healing of disease was effected quietly. There is no record of Jesus laying His hands on the demon possessed, but He frequently laid hands on the sick (Mark 6:5; Luke 4:40; 13:13).

The present writer is convinced that Jesus did not follow the practices of His contemporaries. His methods and teaching differed from those of the Jewish exorcists, because the source of His power was different.

Chapter 4

THEORIES OF DEMON POSSESSION

Many divergent theories attempting to grapple with demonic phenomena in the Synoptic Gospels have been suggested. Some have adopted the extreme view that demons never existed, while others have attributed to Jesus and His followers all the extravagance and superstition associated with ethnic and rabbinic demonology. In this chapter some of the more important theories of demon possession will be examined in the light of the teaching in the Synoptic Gospels. Where the present writer believes that a theory does not account for all the facts, a critique of the theory will be attempted.

THE ACCOMMODATION THEORY

This view suggests that Jesus and the Synoptic writers accommodate themselves to the general beliefs of the Jews regarding the demons. They do not say that demon possession is false or true. The theory claims that Jesus was free from the ignorance and superstitions of His age, but in conformity with the prevailing beliefs, He spoke of demon possession in the language of His contemporaries. The view states that Jesus really knew the truth and only accommodated Himself to the ideas of His ignorant and superstitious hearers who were not able to grasp the true facts. It is suggested that this was the best way to lead His hearers to the truth.

The men and women said to be demon possessed, whom Jesus

encountered, were really suffering from physical and mental disease. In the minds of the people they were demon possessed, so Jesus referred to them as demon possessed. The healing of the diseases is described as casting out evil spirits, and this is how Jesus referred to it. In other words, though Jesus knew differently, He accommodated His language to the popular beliefs and ideas of His age. It has also been suggested that the expression "having a demon" is a synonym for "to be mad" (John 7:20; 8:48; 10:20. Cf. Mark 3:21).¹ Thus, a lunatic, being aware of this association of ideas, might be under the delusion that he was demon possessed. "A wise physician might cure the delusion by means of an affected exorcism of the non-existent evil spirit."²

While this theory is plausible and reasonable, the present writer feels that it does not deal adequately with all the facts. The following weaknesses are noted:

(1) While it is acknowledged that a good teacher will accommodate himself to a certain extent, the question really is whether the narratives in this particular case will admit the theory of accommodation in respect of belief in demons and demon possession. In the present writer's opinion, the narratives preclude accommodation. The whole procedure of Jesus shows that He treated demon possession as a reality.

¹A[lfred] B[arry], "Demoniacs," Dr. William Smith's Dictionary of the Bible, rev. and ed. H.B. Hackett, I (New York: Hurd and Houghton, 1877), 585.

²W.H. Kent, "Demoniacs," The Catholic Encyclopedia (1913), IV, 712.

His conversations with demoniacs were not feigned; His ministry of expulsion bears the stamp of spiritual warfare; and His command to the demons not to make Him known, gives the impression that Jesus treated demon possession as a genuine phenomenon. To accuse Jesus of accommodation is to cast a strong aspersion on His person and character. As it has been demonstrated in Chapter 3, Jesus rejected all the current practices of exorcism. He never used magical incantations, nor adopted the methods of His Jewish contemporaries, nor made a show of His success. To suggest that Jesus used the language that He did, while all the time He was perfectly aware that there was no corresponding reality on which the language was founded, is to brand Him a liar and a deceiver. In the present writer's opinion, Jesus did not, and could not, stoop to methods of deception in order to lead His hearers to the truth.

(2) The theory confuses demon possession with disease. As Nevius points out,

It represents him not only as speaking of diseases as possession by demons, but as personifying diseases, and actually addressing them as demons, holding formal conversation with them asking them questions, and receiving answers from them. . . .³

It has been noted that in the Synoptic Gospels the demoniacs are frequently distinguished from those suffering with physical diseases (Matthew 4:24; Mark 1:32; 16:17,18; Luke 6:17,18). The same symptoms

³ John L. Nevius, Demon Possession (8th ed.; Grand Rapids, Michigan: Kregel Publications, 1968), p. 247.

are sometimes referred to as possession, and sometimes as bodily disease (cf. Matthew 17:15,18 with Matthew 4:24; Matthew 12:22 with Mark 7:32). It has also been noted that Jesus' method of healing the sick was different from His method of delivering the possessed. He frequently laid hands on the sick, but He never laid hands on the possessed.⁴ The accommodation theory cannot account for this difference. Taylor well observes, "Accommodation to the ideas of the possessed for curative purposes is nowhere indicated or suggested."⁵

(3) This theory does not take into account that demons are set forth as speaking through the human body. They also have the ability to recognize Jesus as the Son of God (Matthew 8:29; Mark 1:24; 5:7). The Messiahship of Jesus seemed to be hidden from ordinary persons (including the disciples) for a long period.

(4) This theory represents Jesus not as instructing His disciples in the truth, but rather deceiving them and encouraging superstition. The Synoptic Gospels indicate that Jesus spoke publicly and privately of demons as personal evil spirits, and that He related demon possession to the power of Satan. (The reader is referred to the sections on the Beelzebul controversy, the return of the unclean spirit, and the commission to the disciples).⁶ To attribute this to Jesus Christ, as

⁴See p. 98.

⁵Vincent Taylor, The Gospel According to St. Mark (2nd ed.; London: Macmillan and Company, 1966), p. 175.

⁶See pp. 80-90.

Moss says, "introduces an unwelcome element of unreality into Christ's teaching, and implies a lack of candour on His part."⁷

However, it is recognized that the incarnation of Jesus involved a limitation of His knowledge upon certain subjects. Jesus Himself indicated that He did not know the date of the Parousia (Mark 13:32). Also, according to Paul's teaching, particularly in Philippians 2:7-8, some measure of self-emptying took place in the incarnation of Jesus. It may be conceded too, that in the case of Jesus, as a Divine teacher, there must be some condescension or accommodation to the capacities and beliefs of ordinary people. Some measure of accommodation seems inevitable. This is not to accept the theory of accommodation, but to suggest that any teacher who endeavours to make himself understood to his hearers, will use language to communicate effectively. Nevertheless, "a good teacher will not carry his accommodation to the point of confirming his hearers in their delusions."⁸

THE PATHOLOGICAL THEORY

Attempts have been made to explain the phenomena of demon possession as pathological. Perhaps the most balanced statement is from the pen of Alexander, a medical doctor.⁹ He demonstrates that the

⁷R.W. Moss, "Possession," Dictionary of the Bible, ed. James Hastings (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1909), p. 740.

⁸Kent, "Demoniacs," p. 713.

⁹Wm. Menzies Alexander, Demonic Possession in the New Testament: Its Relations Historical, Medical, and Theological (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1902).

physical symptoms of all cases of demon possession in the Synoptic Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles from the medical viewpoint are symptoms of "lunacy or idiocy." These cases fall into three broad categories: (1) epileptic insanity (the Capernaum demoniac); (2) acute mania (the Gerasene demoniac); (3) epileptic idiocy (the demoniac boy).¹⁰ As the physical symptoms of the possessed can be explained by the principles of medical science, he concludes that these symptoms are to be regarded as natural. If there are factors which modern science is unable to account for and explain, then he suggests that these may be thought of as supernatural.¹¹

Examining the cases in the Synoptic Gospels and Acts, he discovers the criterion of genuine possession in the two incidents (Mark 1:23-28; 5:1-20) where the demoniacs utter a confession of Jesus as the Messiah or Son of God. Modern science cannot account for this phenomenon, though explanations have been suggested. There is the theory of accident, which says that, since the insane are capable of uttering the unexpected and illogical, they accidentally stumbled on the truth of Jesus' Messiahship. There is also the theory of clairvoyance, which states that these insane persons had clairvoyant abilities by which they were capable of divining the true nature and divinity of Jesus. Such theories really end by seeking to explain the phenomenon away. Having thus established this criterion, Alexander is forced to

¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 120-21.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 147.

accept only the Capernaum demoniac and the Gerasene demoniac, along with the general references (Mark 1:34; cf. Luke 4:41; Mark 3:11,12) as evidence of genuine demonic possession.¹² Because of the absence of the confession of Jesus as Messiah, the other incidents of demon possession in the New Testament can be accounted for on natural, scientific grounds.

Alexander further points out that "the remarkable paucity of the cases 'self-attested' and the restriction of them [genuine cases] to the earlier portion of Christ's ministry" is strong evidence to demonstrate the authority and dominion of Jesus over the demonic powers, in that they were forced to obey His injunction to be muzzled and not to make Him known.¹³ It is only a further step for Alexander to show that the continuance of genuine demon possession in sub-apostolic times cannot be attested as authentic.¹⁴

His final conclusion is that genuine possession was local and temporary: "genuine demonic possession was a unique phenomenon in this history of the world; being confined indeed to the earlier portion of the ministry of our Lord."¹⁵ He views demon possession as one of the manifestations of the powers of darkness which sought to counteract the establishing of the kingdom of God inaugurated by Jesus Christ.¹⁶

¹²Ibid., p. 158.

¹³Ibid., pp. 164-65.

¹⁴Ibid., pp. 216ff.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 247. Italics his.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 249.

This is a balanced presentation of the pathological theory, but is not, in the present writer's opinion, adequate, since it fails to take fully into account all the data in the Synoptic Gospels.

(1) Alexander attempts to classify all the cases of demon possession in the New Testament as pathological. This present writer disagrees with his classification. Matthew clearly distinguishes between demoniacs (demon possession) and disease, even singling out epileptics. He says, "And they brought him all the sick, those afflicted with various diseases and pains, demoniacs, epileptics, and paralytics, and he healed them" (4:24). Mark 1:32,34 also distinguishes between those who were sick and those possessed with demons. The commission of Jesus to His disciples shows that He distinguished demon possession from disease: "Heal the sick . . . cast out demons" (Matthew 10:8). Also, when Jesus addressed the Pharisees, He made a distinction between casting out demons and performing cures (Luke 13:32). Jesus' method of treating the sick and the possessed indicates a distinction: "He cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were sick" (Matthew 8:16). The New Testament does not speak of "casting out" a sickness or a disease. Jesus' attitude to the sick and to the possessed was different. He often required faith of the sick before He healed them (Matthew 9:29; Mark 5:34; 10:52; Luke 17:19), but there is no record that He ever required faith of those who were possessed by demons. The healing of disease was effected quietly and without violence. However, in the expulsion of demons a violent reaction or paroxysm often accompanied the deliverance (Mark 9:26;

Luke 4:35). There is no record of Jesus laying His hands on the demon possessed, but He frequently laid hands on the sick (Mark 6:5; Luke 4:40; 13:13). This evidence, in the present writer's opinion, strongly attests to the fact that demon possession is a phenomenon distinct from disease. Alexander does not account for this evidence in arriving at his classification.

(2) Alexander claims that the confession of Jesus as Messiah or Son of God is the only criterion for genuine possession. The criterion he uses can establish genuine possession, but it cannot be used by itself to eliminate other possible cases. To limit the expression of genuine possession to this criterion alone, is, in the present writer's opinion, too arbitrary a way of using the criterion. Alexander also states in his conclusion that this unique phenomenon was confined to the earlier ministry of Jesus.¹⁷ However, when Alexander considers the case of Saul (I Samuel 16), he declares, "the case of Saul is undoubtably to be regarded as one of possession by an evil spirit."¹⁸ Alexander is thus inconsistent. One wonders what criterion he used to come to the conclusion that Saul was possessed by an evil spirit. There certainly was no Messianic confession. How could Saul be possessed if genuine possession was local and temporary and confined to a short period of Jesus' ministry? This present writer maintains that the limits of genuine possession cannot be

¹⁷Ibid., p. 249.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 20.

confined to what Alexander calls "the classic criterion of genuine demonic possession--the confession of Jesus as Messiah."¹⁹ To hold this single criterion and to explain the remaining phenomena as "the physical element or the presence of mental disease,"²⁰ is, as Unger says, "to state the fact of the disorder, but to give up all explanation of its cause."²¹

(3) Alexander not only fails to take into account Jesus' ministry to the demon possessed, but he also fails to account for the teaching of Jesus on the subject of possession. If genuine possession is such a rare phenomenon, as Alexander maintains, it seems strange that Jesus should instruct His disciples to deal with a phenomenon which they never encountered. Alexander does not offer any explanation for the commission of Jesus to His disciples: "cast out demons" (Matthew 10:8). If genuine possession was limited to two cases, and was only temporary, why did Jesus send out His disciples giving them authority over the unclean spirits (Mark 3:15; 6:7)? Mark 6:13 states, "And they cast out many demons. . . ." This commission to cast out demons is implicit also in the sending out of the seventy (Luke 10:1), for Scripture says, "The seventy returned with joy, saying, 'Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name'" (Luke 10:17). According to Alexander's criterion of genuine possession--the confession

¹⁹Ibid., p. 173.

²⁰Ibid., p. 171.

²¹Merrill F. Unger, Biblical Demonology (7th ed.; Wheaton, Illinois: Scripture Press, 1967), p. 99.

of Jesus as Messiah--Jesus was the only person who could possibly have encountered genuine possession and dealt with it. If this is so, then it makes Jesus' teaching, His commission to the disciples, and the record of their ministry in the Synoptic Gospels incomprehensible. The question of Jesus' character and integrity is also at stake, as was pointed out in the critique of the Accommodation Theory.

(4) In seeking to explain the "demonic testimonies," Alexander says that "genuine demonic possession was one of its [the counter-movement of the powers of darkness against the establishment of the kingdom] manifestations."²² It seems to the present writer that, wherever an attempt is made to establish the kingdom of God, there is always "a counter-movement among the powers of darkness," and this does not preclude the manifestation of genuine demonic possession. The overwhelming mass of evidence from mission fields around the world testifies to this manifestation.²³ While a large part of the evidence may be explained on natural, scientific grounds, it seems certain that at least some of the cases cannot be explained on any other ground than

²²Alexander, op. cit., p. 249.

²³John L. Nevius, Demon Possession (8th ed.; Grand Rapids, Michigan: Kregel Publications, 1968), contains authentic case histories from China, India, and Japan. Demon Experiences in Many Lands (Chicago: Moody Press, 1960), cites cases from various countries. Robert Peterson, Roaring Lion (London: Overseas Missionary Fellowship, 1968), describes how church growth in Indonesian Borneo increased rapidly after years of languishing. Those involved declare that this growth is due in large measure to the demonstration of the power of God over the power of darkness, and to the ministry of casting out demons from those possessed.

that of genuine demonic possession.

(5) With his medical background, Alexander views all the New Testament cases of so-called demon possession as exhibiting symptoms of lunacy or idiocy. Hugh White demurs, and notes the differences between demon possession and insanity based on his long missionary experience.²⁴ Koch, from his wide experience of counselling and research in this field, notes that a person suffering from mental illness will become quiet when prayer is offered. On the other hand, when prayer is made in the presence of a possessed person, "he will begin to build up a resistance and become angry and violent, and start to curse and blaspheme. . . . He may even start to spit, or tear a Bible up and throw it across the room."²⁵ Weatherhead also quotes a number of authorities regarding epilepsy and points out that no one yet understands the nature and working of epilepsy. He says that

. . . in spite of all our Western and modern superiority of scientific nomenclature, we are no further on in our understanding of epilepsy by calling it 'epilepsy,' than by ascribing it to possession, since no one knows what epilepsy is, what causes it, what happens when an attack takes place, or what cures it.²⁶

In the light of these inadequacies, it seems to the present

²⁴Hugh W. White, Demonism Verified and Analyzed (Richmond, Virginia: The Presbyterian Committee of Publication, 1922), pp. 12-20.

²⁵Kurt Koch, Occult Bondage and Deliverance (7501 Berghausen Bd., West Germany: Evangelization Publishers, 1970), pp. 64-65.

²⁶Leslie D. Weatherhead, Psychology, Religion and Healing (rev. ed.; Nashville: Abingdon Press, Apex Books, 1952), p. 93.

writer that Alexander's position, while offering a compromise, is not tenable. It is therefore rejected.

THE MYTHICAL THEORY

This theory has been associated with David Strauss²⁷ and the mythical school. It suggests that the Synoptic accounts of demonic expulsions were merely symbolic, without an actual basis of fact. Barry shows, according to this view, that demon possession is "only a lively symbol of the prevalence of evil in the world," and the casting out of demons by Jesus is "a corresponding symbol of his conquest over that evil power by his doctrine and his life."²⁸ He also indicates that this idea stands or falls with the mythical theory as a whole. In the Gospel records the plain, straightforward narration of the incidents as facts would make their statement here not a figure or a symbol, but a lie.²⁹

There appears to be a re-emphasis of the mythical theory in the theology of Rudolf Bultmann. Bultmann speaks much of "myth," but unfortunately he has never made it clear what he means by the word.³⁰ Bultmann views the message of Jesus as unintelligible apart from an

²⁷ David Friedrich Strauss, The Life of Jesus Critically Examined, trans. from 4th German ed. by Marian Evans, I (New York: Calvin Blanchard, 1856), 11-76.

²⁸ Barry, "Demoniacs," p. 585.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Stephen Neill, The Interpretation of the New Testament, 1861-1961, The Firth Lectures, 1962 (New York: Oxford University Press, A Galaxy Book, 1966), p. 227.

acknowledgement of demonic warfare and a cosmos alienated from God.

He says,

Jesus' message is connected with the hope . . . which awaits salvation . . . from a cosmic catastrophe which will do away with all conditions of the present world as it is. The presupposition of this hope is the pessimistic-dualistic view of the Satanic corruption of the total world complex.³¹

Bultmann, stating the mythical view, says, "The cosmology of the New Testament is essentially mythical in character."³² Earth is said to be "the scene of the supernatural activity of God and his angels on the one hand, and of Satan and his daemons on the other."³³ As well, evil spirits may possess men. However, Bultmann rejects the mythical view as obsolete, and views the task of modern theology as "stripping the Kerygma from its mythical framework, of 'demythologizing' it," in order to make the New Testament message pertinent to modern man.³⁴ For him, the mythical view "is simply the cosmology of a pre-scientific age."³⁵ Now that modern man has discovered the forces and laws of nature, belief in spirits, whether they be good or evil, is no longer tenable.³⁶ Sickness and its cure are now ascribed to natural causation. Bultmann is emphatic: "they are not the result of daemonic activity or

³¹ Rudolf Bultmann, Theology of the New Testament, trans. Kendrick Grobel, I (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951), pp. 4-5.

³² Rudolf Bultmann, "New Testament and Mythology," Kerygma and Myth: A Theological Debate, ed. Hans Werner Bartsch, trans. Reginald H. Fuller (London: S.P.C.K., 1953), p. 1.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 3.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 4.

of evil spells."³⁷ For Bultmann, the only way to preserve the truth of the New Testament proclamation is to demythologize it.³⁸

As an influential theologian today, Bultmann's position merits close examination. He affirms that the scientific developments of modern man such as electricity and radio, are incompatible with the belief in the New Testament world of spirits.³⁹ However, this is a presupposition which is not clearly substantiated. Schniewind raises the question whether the belief in evil spirits can be dismissed so casually.⁴⁰ He states, "Evil is a cosmic reality, not a notion of man imposed on the universe."⁴¹ In the present writer's understanding, the significance of the New Testament phenomena of demon possession is to be perceived in its relation to the kingdom of God. Man was under the rule of the demonic and dominated by Satan. In the bringing in of the kingdom Jesus was confronted with the forces of evil. Demon possession represented the zenith of the work of the Evil One. Thus, for Jesus and the New Testament world, the expulsion of demons showed that the kingdom of God had indeed come. The deliverance of the demon possessed indicated the overthrow of the demonic rule (cf. Matthew 12:28; Luke 11:20). Schniewind says, "the New Testament invariably regards daemonic

³⁷ Ibid., pp. 4-5.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 10.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 5.

⁴⁰ Julius Schniewind, "A Reply to Bultmann," Kerygma and Myth, p. 92.

⁴¹ Ibid.

possession in the light of Christ's victory over it."⁴² If this is the case, then "belief in such powers per se is no more affected by scientific knowledge than belief in God himself."⁴³ In other words, the criteria of science and technology are not adequate to measure spiritual beings, whether they are angels or demons, God or Satan.

It seems that Bultmann gives a clear expression in his thinking to the "demonological-eschatological motifs." But when he seeks to make the New Testament message relevant to modern man, and demythologizes the Christian message, he considers so much "myth," that there is very little kerygma left in the New Testament. Kallas accuses Bultmann of "paying lip service only to this demonological-eschatological motif" and says he has "left the content behind."⁴⁴ Bultmann recognizes that the demonological-eschatological motifs were central for Jesus, but he deduces, without giving any reasons, that these motifs are irrelevant to modern man. He approaches the New Testament from a human point of view. His thought has moved to a man-centered theology rather than a God-centered theology. There is no supernatural order. If a supernatural order is accepted, in Bultmann's opinion, this alienates modern man from God's message. Therefore, the only way open for Bultmann is to demythologize. When Bultmann speaks of demons, they are not external forces outside of man, but are conceived as a man's own evil impulses,

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 93.

⁴⁴ James Kallas, Jesus and the Power of Satan (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1968), p. 204.

his passions.

Kallas in his critique of Bultmann's position, states,

. . . the fundamental conviction of the New Testament world-view . . . is the belief that there is more to evil than existential bad intentions. There is a non-existential force to which man is subject which perverts all of man's labour's even when his intentions are not bad. . . .

.
Evil seems to be superhuman and endowed with its own malignant power to act even apart from man's intentions.⁴⁵

He is convinced that there is "some force for evil which cannot be reduced to an existential phenomenon."⁴⁶ The New Testament views this force as the rule of the demonic. Kallas rejects the demythologizing process since it explains away the conquering Christ and leaves "a philosophical treatise."⁴⁷

Bultmann's stress is on the essential unity of man.⁴⁸ But to those who suggest that this unity "is torn asunder by daemonic or divine interference," Bultmann then understands modern man to offer a psychological explanation, and call it schizophrenia.⁴⁹ While Bultmann acknowledges that biology and psychology recognize man as "a highly dependent being," he rejects the view that man "has been handed over to powers outside of himself."⁵⁰ This position compels Bultmann to reject the demon possession narratives in the Synoptic Gospels, not because

⁴⁵James Kallas, The Significance of the Synoptic Miracles (Greenwich, Connecticut: The Seabury Press, 1961), p. 111.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 112.

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 114.

⁴⁸Bultmann, "New Testament and Mythology," Kerygma and Myth, p. 6.

⁴⁹Ibid.

⁵⁰Ibid.

they are miraculous, but because he does not accept their anthropology. "He does not believe that man can be seized against his will by forces distinct from man."⁵¹ Bultmann's view contradicts Jesus' teaching at this point.

The present writer, therefore, cannot accept the presuppositions of Bultmann in which he assumes that modern man will not be able to accept the New Testament and scientific development. Also, his method suggested to make the New Testament pertinent to modern man, that is, his demythologizing process, is not acceptable, since the question needs to be raised, and has been raised, whether the existential categories as Bultmann employs them adequately come to terms with the New Testament message.

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL THEORY

Many modern writers have explained the accounts of possession in the Synoptic Gospels as exhibiting the view of antiquity. This view attributed evils of an unknown cause to the work of demons. Instead, modern writers say that the demon possessed are sufferers from psychic disorders which can now be recognized as such. Dodd identifies demon possession with "split personality or schizophrenia if you like the technical term."⁵² But Johannes Weiss, noting the labors of Charcot,

⁵¹James Kallas, The Satanward View: A Study in Pauline Theology (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1966), p. 142.

⁵²C.H. Dodd, Man and His Nature, Broadcast Talks (London: S.C.M., n.d.), p. 82, cited by Leslie D. Weatherhead, Psychology, Religion and Healing, p. 89. Italics, thesis writer.

Richer and Snell, adopts the view that "the cases of so-called possession are usually regarded as acute hysteria, and the cures . . . as the work of suggestion."⁵³ Otto, speaking of the sicknesses of demoniacs, lunatics, and paralytics mentioned in Matthew 4:24, says, "they were ailments which go back essentially to nervous and psychic causes, disturbances, and inhibitions."⁵⁴ Such diseases as blindness, deafness, and dumbness "are often hysterically and nervously conditioned."⁵⁵ Referring to possession or demoniac control, Otto states,

It was compounded of elements of schizophrenia and domination by fixed ideas, was rooted in religious ideas, and . . . was particularly and most easily accessible to the spiritual power of a 'holy one of God.'⁵⁶

Weatherhead attempts a classification of the healing miracles, including the cases of possession, based on the psychological mechanisms which operated. The Gerasene demoniac was a lunatic who "had gone too far in his psychosis to be fully aware of what was happening."⁵⁷ The destruction of the swine was related to the demoniac. Weatherhead tentatively suggests that "the word 'Legion' induced an emotional abreaction." Undoubtably this repressed emotion being suddenly released

⁵³ Johannes Weiss, "Demoniac," The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge (1950), III, 403. Italics, thesis writer.

⁵⁴ Rudolph Otto, The Kingdom of God and the Son of Man, trans. from rev. German ed. by Floyd V. Filson and Bertram Lee Woolf, Lutterworth Library, Vol. IX (London: Lutterworth Press, 1938), p. 346.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 347.

⁵⁷ Weatherhead, Psychology, Religion and Healing, p. 55.

produced shrieks and yells. The result was that the herd of swine stampeded and was drowned.⁵⁸ The Capernaum demoniac was possibly "multiple personality in ancient disguise," and his convulsive seizure "sounds like the modern violent abreaction."⁵⁹ The patient possibly might have been able "to 'read' the subconscious mind of Jesus," and thus was able to recognize Him as the Holy One of God.⁶⁰ The dumb and blind demoniac is postulated as suffering from "hysterical blindness and dumbness common in psychotherapeutic cases."⁶¹ In the case of the demoniac boy, Weatherhead cites Matthew Black as suggesting that the illness may have been psychotic rather than epileptic.⁶² Weatherhead very candidly concludes, "Psychological theories can illumine, but cannot explain, Christ's healing work."⁶³

McCasland, whose basic thesis is that demon possession is an ancient way of describing mental illness, views the demoniac boy as suffering from epilepsy. He infers epilepsy in Mark's account, because Matthew states that the boy was an epileptic (Matthew 17:15), and concedes that the Greek word ἐπιληψία, though well known at the time the Gospels were written, does not occur in the New Testament.⁶⁴ David Cole Wilson, a professor of psychiatry and neurology, writing in

⁵⁸Ibid., p. 57.

⁵⁹Ibid., p. 59.

⁶⁰Ibid.

⁶¹Ibid., p. 60.

⁶²Ibid., p. 67.

⁶³Ibid., p. 69.

⁶⁴S. Vernon McCasland, By the Finger of God (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1951), pp. 32-33.

the introduction concerning the demoniac boy, says, "whether it was true epilepsy or not could not be determined."⁶⁵ McCasland understands the Gerasene demoniac as being a case of acute mania.⁶⁶ He diagnoses the Capernaum demoniac as a case of hysteria.⁶⁷ Wilson, however, is not so sure. He feels that the details are sparse, and the man "might well have been a case of the paranoidal form of schizophrenia. . . . The evidence points toward hysteria, but is not conclusive."⁶⁸ McCasland sees the change in personality as the most decisive mark in demon possession;⁶⁹ he views possession by the Holy Spirit as the counterpart to possession by demons, the differentiation being the type of personality or the person's conduct.⁷⁰ He affirms that a new physiology and psychology have made obsolete the belief in demon possession and the practice of exorcism.⁷¹ The expulsion of demons is only valid if an "animistic psychology" is assumed.⁷² McCasland notes that "healing by exorcism usually involved confidence, faith in the healer, and assurance that the demon was driven away."⁷³ The present writer feels that this is probably true of non-Biblical exorcisms, but the statement cannot be applied to the cases in the New Testament. McCasland is convinced that "the exorcist means by demon possession what the

⁶⁵Ibid., p. x.

⁶⁷Ibid., p. 42.

⁶⁹Ibid., p. 5.

⁷¹Ibid., p. 16.

⁷³Ibid., p. 18.

⁶⁶Ibid., pp. 38-39.

⁶⁸Ibid., p. x.

⁷⁰Ibid., pp. 6-7.

⁷²Ibid.

psychiatrist means by mental illness."⁷⁴ In other words, he equates demon possession with mental illness.

In facing the problem of the demons' recognition of Jesus as "the Holy One of God," McCasland rejects the view that the demons were supernatural beings who immediately recognized Jesus as the Son of God, even though the people did not recognize Him. He claims that this view "gives the incidents no adequate motivation."⁷⁵ Contrary to this claim, the present writer has suggested that Jesus' inauguration of the kingly rule of God in the lives of those who were under the rule of the demonic was known to the demonic forces.⁷⁶ Their cry of recognition indicated that they were aware of the presence of Jesus Christ, their Conqueror.

McCasland also rejects the view that these stories were created by early Christian tradition to establish proof of the Messiahship of Jesus. He regards this view as unsatisfactory, because no adequate reason is given to show that the Gospel documents were unhistorical.⁷⁷

In attempting a solution, McCasland rightly recognizes the enmity, hostility, and defiance between Jesus and the demons.⁷⁸ He finds himself in harmony with the "belief in spirits of an objective animistic nature which may invade human personalities and dominate

⁷⁴Ibid., p. 27.

⁷⁵Ibid., p. 83.

⁷⁶See p. 48.

⁷⁷Ibid., pp. 83-84.

⁷⁸Ibid., p. 85.

them," but prefers to adopt "the modern scientific conceptions of personality."⁷⁹ McCasland also confesses that he can only postulate an answer of which he cannot be certain.

The reason for the lesser degree of certainty lies in the fact that although there is a general psychological pattern through all the exorcisms wherever they occur, there is virtually an infinite variation in the means used to drive out the demons and in the language used by both the demon and the exorcist.⁸⁰

In alluding to the belief that if the secret name of a person is known, his power is known, McCasland attempts to apply this to the situations involving the demoniacs and Jesus. "Our point is that the function of this outcry of the demon in any particular case was the attempt to rob Jesus of his power by unmasking him and pointing out his identity."⁸¹

Oesterreich also adopts a psychological view, though his explanation of possession is different. He regards possession as being mainly due to auto-suggestion. Oesterreich claims that the expulsion of demons "presents the exact counterpart of the genesis of possession."⁸² Just as the origin of possession springs from a man's belief that he is possessed, so also, in Oesterreich's opinion, when the expulsion is successful, that is, when the man is convinced that the possession will continue no longer, the possession disappears. He

⁷⁹Ibid., p. 89.

⁸⁰Ibid., p. 91.

⁸¹Ibid., pp. 91-92.

⁸²Traugott Konstatin Oesterreich, Possession: Demoniactal and Other, trans. D. Ibberson (New York: University Books, 1966), p. 100.

confesses, "The inner nature of this effect of conviction on psychic phenomena is not known and cannot be elucidated. The theory of suggestion can do no more than recognize it."⁸³

Edward Langton, after discussing the phenomena of demon possession, says, "The phenomena of involuntary possession are usually associated with pathological states of body and mind, such as are today diagnosed as epilepsy and hysteria."⁸⁴ He believes that the predisposing cause in all cases of possession is psychical. Thus he accepts the view that most of the phenomena of possession in the Gospels

can probably be sufficiently accounted for on the assumption that emotional psychic states became identified with 'demons' on account of the strong popular belief then prevailing in the existence of such creatures, and in their power to take possession of men and women.⁸⁵

Other factors to be noted are the "subconscious activity of the mind," existing psychic states which suggest individuality, and "some measure of hallucination and auto-suggestion."⁸⁶ Langton also discusses the demons' recognition of Jesus as "the Son of God," but rejects this as evidence of "supernormal knowledge." He says that the knowledge of the demoniacs has been deduced from Jesus' dominating authority, or inferred from His words, or reports about Him.⁸⁷

⁸³Ibid.

⁸⁴Edward Langton, Essentials of Demonology (London: Epworth Press, 1949), p. 154. Italics his.

⁸⁵Ibid., p. 155.

⁸⁶Ibid.

⁸⁷Ibid., p. 153.

Langton rejects the accommodation theory regarding the teaching of Jesus, and then poses the question, "Does His teaching in this respect [that Jesus believed in the existence of Satan and demons] correspond with reality?" His conclusion is, ". . . we are not compelled to accept this teaching as ultimate truth merely because it formed part of the teaching of Jesus."⁸⁸ He resorts to the Kenosis or self-emptying of Jesus and asserts that Jesus was limited in His knowledge. Yet, at the same time, he declares that this limitation "in no way diminishes His authority as a teacher of spiritual truth."⁸⁹ Even though Langton concedes that Jesus possessed supreme knowledge in the sphere of demonology, he still feels bound to conclude that an acceptance by Jesus of the popular beliefs in demons "does not prove that these popular beliefs correspond to reality."⁹⁰

The psychological theory is very popular today. Nevertheless, the present writer feels that it is inadequate for the following reasons:

(1) In observing the viewpoints of the various writers, this researcher is concerned about the lack of unanimity among them. As the details of the Synoptic records of demon possession are examined, various and contrary suggestions are made regarding these elements within them. Can the psychologist not be accused of "trying to explain a spiritual concept in psychological terms and identify spiritual

⁸⁸Ibid., p. 223.

⁸⁹Ibid.

⁹⁰Ibid., p. 224.

activities with psychological tools"⁹¹ as has been acknowledged? The same writer further says, "As long as we are looking for demons as defined by psychiatric diagnosis we will never find any, for psychology does not have such terminology nor is it in the diagnostic category."⁹² Also, the present writer feels that there are factors in the Gospel case histories which defy any categories that the psychologist has been able to suggest. For example, in the Gerasene demoniac incident the demoniac showed signs of resistance to Jesus (Mark 5:7); he also possessed the ability to recognize Jesus as "Son of the Most High God"--in other words he possessed clairvoyant abilities; the demoniac spoke in a voice which was not his own normal speaking voice (Mark 5:9; Luke 8:31); and the demons left the man and entered the swine (Mark 5:13). This is what Koch calls "occult transference."⁹³ The variety of explanations for the phenomena in the Synoptics does not breed confidence in the theory, and the psychologists' inability to account for all the phenomena leave the present writer dissatisfied.

(2) Different suggestions and explanations are given to account for the demons' recognition of Jesus as "the Holy One of God."

Weatherhead suggests that the demons had mediumistic powers; McCasland

⁹¹John C. Faul, "What in Hell is the Devil doing on Earth-- Response and Reaction," Christian Medical Society Journal, II (Spring, 1971), 14.

⁹²Ibid., p. 15.

⁹³Kurt Koch, Occult Bondage and Deliverance (7501 Berghausen Bd., West Germany: Evangelization Publishers, 1970), p. 58.

proposes the knowledge of the secret name of the person as knowledge of his power; while Langton indicates that the demoniacs either deduced or inferred from Jesus' words or reports about Him, His true identity. Weatherhead's view would strengthen the possession view; McCasland's theory is rejected as superstitious; and, if Langton's view is true, why did others not come to a similar conclusion? It is indeed strange that only the demons had this knowledge.

(3) If the psychological theory is accepted, then the teaching of Jesus is no longer authoritative on the subject. Langton is forced to conclude that "we are not compelled to accept this teaching as ultimate truth."⁹⁴ Thus Jesus' conflict with the Pharisees over Beelzebul, His teaching, and His commissioning and instruction of the disciples cannot be accepted "as ultimate truth." Was Jesus, who claimed to be the Truth, deluding His hearers and His disciples? The present writer cannot reconcile this position with the person of Christ as the Synoptic Gospels picture Him.

(4) To deny the phenomenon of demon possession, particularly as it is manifest in the Synoptic Gospels, is to deny the rule of the demonic over men. The present writer has sought to show the relation and significance of these expulsions to the inauguration of the kingdom of God.⁹⁵ The explanation of demon possession in psychological terms robs the work of Christ of its purpose, since His work relates to the

⁹⁴Langton, Essentials of Demonology, p. 223.

⁹⁵See p. 48.

kingdom of God (I John 3:8b; Matthew 12:28). If there is no demonic rule over mankind, then there does not appear to be any necessity for the kingly rule of God.

Wright states that an intermediate position between the usual psychologist's position of rejection, and the view that regards possession as a genuine phenomenon, is possible. He suggests that

. . . a demon can seize on a repressed facet of the personality, and from this centre influence a person's actions. The demon may produce hysterical blindness or dumbness, or symptoms of other illnesses, such as epilepsy.⁹⁶

One feels that Wright is trying to be generous and kind to the psychologists, but, while he tries to harmonize the two positions, he really ends up by affirming genuine demon possession.

⁹⁶J.S.W[right], "Possession," The New Bible Dictionary, ed. J.D. Douglas (London: The Inter-Varsity Fellowship, 1962), p. 1011.

Chapter 5

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study has been to examine the evidences in the Synoptic Gospels and to demonstrate the possibility and validity of the phenomenon of demon possession.

The teaching on demon possession in the Synoptic Gospels has been treated exegetically in Chapter 3 to furnish the facts for this study. However, in order to provide a background for a proper understanding of the demonic phenomena in the Synoptics, the ethnic and Jewish views in the Old Testament and inter-testamental periods were surveyed in Chapter 2.

Various theories have attempted to interpret the phenomena of demon possession in order to make it more relevant to modern man. Setting aside the extreme views that demons have never existed on the one hand, and that Jesus was a rabid Jewish exorcist on the other, the main theories are considered in the light of Jesus' ministry and teaching as is indicated in the Synoptics.

The accommodation theory represents Jesus as accommodating Himself to the people's beliefs, and yet at the same time, being aware that their beliefs were not true to the real facts. This is not consistent with the Person or character of Jesus as the teacher of divine truth. The theory confuses demon possession with disease, but this is contrary to the Scriptural teaching which distinguishes between physical disease and demon possession. Also, Jesus' method of healing

the sick differed from His method of casting out demons. The present writer feels that the theory does not account for all the phenomena of the cases in the Synoptics. No attempt is made to explain the ability of the demoniacs to recognize Jesus as "the Holy One of God." The theory depicts Jesus as confirming His disciples in superstition, for He taught them concerning demons and commissioned them to cast out demons. The present writer recognizes that some accommodation seems to be necessary. But the amount of accommodation must be commensurate with His moral character, His teaching, and account for all the phenomena. This theory fails to account for all the data in the Synoptic records.

Under the pathological theory, Alexander's balanced presentation is considered. By limiting genuine possession as local and temporary, and reducing the New Testament evidence to only two genuine cases, Alexander fails to recognize and account for the distinction between demon possession and disease, a distinction which both the Gospel writers and Jesus clearly make. Alexander, in making the confession of Jesus as Messiah the only criterion for genuine possession, uses the criterion too arbitrarily. He is not consistent, for he regards the case of Saul as one of possession, which is contrary to his conclusion that genuine demonic possession was local and temporary, and confined to the earlier ministry of Jesus. He also does not adequately account for the teaching of Jesus and His commissioning of the disciples to cast out demons. His explanation of the "demonic testimonies" does not accord with the history and experience of the Church, especially on the mission fields. His description of all the cases of demon possession in the New Testament as

featuring symptoms of lunacy or idiocy has not increased man's understanding of the phenomena. It has substituted another set of terms, but has not offered any more significant explanation, and does not deal adequately with all the facts.

The mythical theory seeks to explain the phenomena of demon possession symbolically. Demon possession in this view, is merely a symbol for the evil in the world. Bultmann's rejection of the "mythical" view as he understands it, is also considered. For him, the only way to make the New Testament message relevant to modern man is to "demythologize" it. The present writer has pointed out the significance of demon possession in respect to the kingdom of God. It appears that Bultmann acknowledges the demonological-eschatological motifs, but, in the course of demythologizing, these motifs are discarded because they are not relevant to modern man. Bultmann views demons as man's own evil impulses. Kallas criticizes Bultmann's understanding of evil as "existential bad intentions," and shows that the New Testament's emphasis on the rule of the demonic over mankind indicates the true source of this "force for evil." Bultmann's rejection of the view, that man as a dependent being has been delivered over to powers outside of himself, leads him to reject the demon possession narratives, because he cannot accept their anthropology. But this view contradicts the teaching of Jesus. The present writer feels that Bultmann's position is unacceptable because of his presuppositions and also because of his demythologizing process.

The psychological theory views the demoniacs in the Synoptic

Gospels as suffering from various psychic maladies, which can now be understood. This researcher is disturbed by the diversity of interpretations offered to explain the phenomena of demon possession. It is suggested that the psychologists' attempts to explain the phenomena of demon possession in psychological terms are not valid. Psychologists themselves recognize that spiritual concepts cannot be described in psychological terms. There are also factors which defy any psychological category, such as the ability of demons to recognize Jesus as the Messiah, and also to control the human voice. No consensus of opinion is evident in the suggestions given to explain the cause of the demons' recognition of Jesus as the Son of God. The acceptance of this theory calls in question the authority of Jesus' teaching on the subject. Langton, who adopts the theory, is forced to reject Jesus' teaching on demon possession "as ultimate truth." The present writer prefers to accept Jesus' teaching as authoritative over against the psychological views. Finally, the theory fails to take into account the significance of the expulsion of demons in relation to the kingdom of God. The manifestation of the demonic, especially in possession, is an understandable and reasonable reaction to the inauguration of the kingdom of God. Therefore, in the present writer's opinion, the psychological theory fails to adequately account for all the data in the Synoptic Gospels.

Weatherhead, though strongly influenced by the psychological interpretation, is not convinced that it deals adequately with all the facts. He puts forward three pieces of evidence which, in his

opinion, make belief in the existence of demons and demon possession credible. There is (1) the evidence from the mission-field; (2) evidence from the phenomenon of multiple personality; and (3) evidence from spiritualism, by which he means that other intelligences appear to control human beings.¹ In his own conclusions he recognizes that much disease has been mistakenly ascribed to demon possession, and questions whether all cases of demon possession in Scripture and on the mission-field "can be completely explained in terms of psychiatric nomenclature."² Weatherhead further affirms that "belief in the possibility of demon possession is not incompatible with the tenets of the Christian religion or contradicted by any reputable scientific research."³

The cases of demon possession and the teaching of Jesus set forth in the Synoptic Gospels, in the present writer's opinion, can only be properly understood when these materials are taken as they stand. Attempts to offer alternative explanations have ended by explaining the phenomena away. Those who have sought to isolate the incidents and treat them as separate entities, have failed to understand what Kallas calls, "the demonic-cosmic motif."⁴ He shows that this motif dominates the Synoptic narratives, and that apart from it they

¹Leslie D. Weatherhead, Psychology, Religion and Healing (rev. ed.; Nashville: Abingdon Press, Apex Books, 1952), pp. 94-99.

²Ibid., p. 99.

³Ibid., p. 100.

⁴James Kallas, The Significance of the Synoptic Miracles (Greenwich, Connecticut: The Seabury Press, 1961), pp. 58ff.

cannot be understood. In the Synoptics the evils of this world are ascribed to Satanic forces. Mankind is under the rule of the demonic. As Chapter 3 of this study points out, the commencement of Jesus' ministry heralded the inauguration of the kingdom of God. Jesus understood the kingdom of God as the rule of God in the lives of men. He clearly indicates that the expulsion of demons is a sign that the kingdom has really arrived (Matthew 12:28). "This world was a demon-infested infected world in need of liberation, and the advance of God's sovereignty was in direct proportion to the rout of demons."⁵ The present writer contends that the demonological motif of the Synoptic Gospels is necessary for a proper understanding of the purpose of the incarnation. The cases of demon possession bring into sharp focus man's demonic enslavement and the true liberty which the Son of God brings.

Also, it is believed that Jesus' teaching on the subject was intended to inform His hearers of the truth about demons. Jesus came to enlighten men's minds and to reveal the truth. The present writer maintains that the only satisfactory explanation of the demonic phenomena must be consistent with the teaching of Jesus. In considering Jesus' commission to His disciples, His command to preach the kingdom of God was never separated from His command to cast out demons. Thus, it is attested that the expulsion of demons in the ministry of Jesus and His disciples visibly portrayed the victory of the kingdom of God

⁵Ibid., p. 66.

over the tyrannical dominion of Satan. Therefore, the present writer subscribes to the view that demon possession occurred in the Synoptic Gospels. Since this has been demonstrated, the existence of demon possession as a genuine phenomenon occurring today is possible and valid.

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